

# PROJECT ROOM

## POST PERFORMANCE VIDEO, PROSPECTIVE 1: LOS ANGELES

*Curator of the exhibition:*  
**Marie de Brugerolle**

(c) Coleman Collins

**Carré d'Art-Nîmes**  
**November 30, 2021**  
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**Press contact : Delphine Verrières-Gaultier - Carré d'Art**  
**Tel. : +33 (0)4 66 76 35 77 - Email : [communication@carreartmusee.com](mailto:communication@carreartmusee.com)**

# **PRESENTATION OF THE EXHIBITION**

**Curator of the exhibition: Marie de Brugerolle**

COLEMAN COLLINS

RODNEY MCMILLIAN

NATHANIEL MELLORS

ANNA WITTENBERG

Post Performance Future is a concept whose aim is to examine the impact and legacy of performance upon the visual arts.

This is the first exhibition dedicated to post-performance video. We will be focusing upon the works of four artists who work in Los Angeles or who have been trained in that city.

None of these works have ever been shown in France, and for the most part, they have been made especially for this exhibition (Anna Wittenberg, Coleman Collins).

## **ROOM 1 : FOREWORD, CABINET OF CURIOSITIES**

### **ANNA WITTENBERG**

*The Joker's Hand*, 2018, charcoal, 38 x 35,5 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

*Inspector General*, 2019, oil pastel, 60,5 x 35,5 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

*The Minotaur*, 2019, charcoal, 33 x 43 cm. Private Collection.

*Concrete Foot*, 2020, charcoal, 43 x 35,5 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

### **COLEMAN COLLINS**

*Ensemble*, 2020, silkscreen on dibond, 75 x 75 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

### **NATHANIEL MELLORS**

*The 7 Ages of Brain Teaser*, 2009, video, 10'. Courtesy of the artist & Crèvecoeur, Paris

*(The 7 Ages of) Facial Recog*, 2020, resin and mixed media, full size. Courtesy of the artist & Crèvecoeur, Paris

The room has been transformed into a little cabinet of curiosities, in the now obsolete tradition of the amateur collectors of the past. Designed as a preface or green room of sorts, a space where one prepares for what is coming, it features a representative selection of thematic works of the exhibition.

Anna Wittenberg's drawings are emblematic of her studio work, which is linked to the conception of stories that sometimes evolve into films. Here, the works serve to introduce the content of the exhibition. Drawings (sketches, storyboards, essays), objects (incidental accessories) or trailers serve as so many lead-ins or clues to the main theme of post-performance video, that is to say "impure" projection, with its peripheral and sculptural aspects and perception as object. The preparatory sketch, or script, the post-script, extractions or extensions in volume, accessories and scenic objects, the {set}, all are interactive with the movement of the images. From the "before" to the "after" image, these post-consumed or post-acted objects require us to take a stand. This conscience of the volume of the image permeates the entire exhibition. Sometimes programmatic (*Concrete Foot*), or combining hybrid characters (*Minotaur*), Wittenberg's repertoire of cartoon characters conveys a criticism of the imagery of cartoons and fairy tales whose ambivalence (*Joker's Hand*) or sexuality (*Inspector General*) she lays bare. Her bold charcoal strokes heightened with colored oil pastels tie in with the mixed colors of Coleman Collins' serigraphs. Set on the green wall facing them, *Ensemble* is a colored serigraph on Dibond.

The partition into four squares that divide the surface of the work enables the viewer to visualize it as a sequence, like a puzzle. One makes out figures (faces, hands, costumes) in shades of blue, pink, red and brown. The print was created from excerpts of the artist's video, presented in the last room.

On a flat screen, *The 7 Ages of Britain Teaser* serves as an introduction to the *Ourhouse-1 (Time)* episode. The project's recently completed, longer film is presented in Room 4. Next to the screen, we are faced with a figure. It is the mask used in the film which is metaphorically projected at us. Here we can establish a parallel with the *Imagines*, the wax death masks cast from molds made of the faces of the dead in order to preserve their features which were then hung in the vestibules of Roman houses. They can be perceived as a sort of archetype of the image (*imago*). It is also a prolegomenon of the potential encounters and projections that unfold over the course of the exhibition... One can already hear and see Rodney McMillian's video from the entrance to the room.

## **ROOM 2 : RODNEY MCMILLIAN**

*Neshoba County Fair*, 2012, video installation (6'39'') and 27 pencil drawings on paper by Horace Taylor (1942-1956), 29,2 x 20,3 cm each. Courtesy of the artist & Vielmetter Los Angeles. Edited by Fil Rütting.

The sound of a familiar voice and the beat of a song that also seems to belong to a collective memory, that of the chants of the Psalms, beckon us in. Rodney McMillian's work is made up of a video projected on the wall (*Neshoba County Fair*) and a series of twenty-seven drawings by Horace Taylor, created from 1942–56. The ensemble makes up a work that requires that we situate ourselves. On one side stands a line of caricatures that date back to the 1940s, and on the other, a puppet theater. Over a podium we see the name "Neshoba," a county in Mississippi. The first voice you hear is that of Ronald Reagan. It was taped during his 1980 presidential campaign. In his speech, which is playing in the room, the then future President of the United States uses key race-baiting terms, chosen by Lee Atwater (1951–1991), a political strategist who also advised George W. Bush. Nicknamed the "Dark Vador of the Republican Party," this former ad-man pursued a "Southern" strategy, initiated by Richard Nixon, crafted to seduce the white conservative electorate of the South. The speech is rather oblique, deliberately avoiding direct mention of Blacks but using terms that are part of the Segregationist vocabulary. By raising questions of welfare and unemployment, it implicitly aims at calling for a return to the Segregationist policies as exemplified by the Jim Crow<sup>1</sup> laws that prevailed before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The selection of Neshoba is doubly strategic since the city had been the site of an infamous lynching in 1964. The sound file is followed by another recording, a psalm (*Come to My Heart Lord Jesus*), sung by Erykah Badu (*Out of My Mind, Just in Time*). Two typological discourses that should bring people together (politically to create the polis, the democratic civic body, and religion, from the word *religere*, which means to bind together), but which, based on recent historical facts, have been used ironically to instill divisiveness. The crayon portraits by artist Horace Taylor metaphorically represent the type of electors who might have voted for Reagan at the time. McMillian sources them in secondhand stores or flea markets. The artist then gives them descriptive labels, preserving the original price tags. One might point out the use of caricature in the sketches and the masks of the hand puppets. Caricatures have often been used for political purposes (bringing to mind for example the sketches of Jacques-Louis David in 1792). The exaggeration of features and psychological typing based upon characteristics that denote a particular social class or socio-political category is a double-edged sword. McMillian often uses popular songs, which he performs himself, often in character as a preacher or the hero from a cartoon. Consequently, the emergence of a figure of the Other appropriating that which was

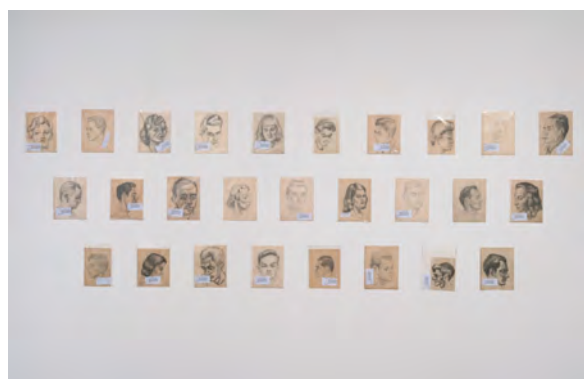
traditionally the privilege of the dominant group upends the situation. In the center, between two typologies of images, we physically create a revolution, a literal turnabout, in order to see, reexamine, better perceive, hear and finally, listen. The notion of scale is brought to bear. The portraits are created in the usual formats (letter or A4) of our classroom notebooks or everyday sheets of paper, while the projected puppets are slightly smaller than an adult. One can reflect at eye level, upon hierarchy or the asymmetry of the level of the gaze. The down-home familiarity of Reagan in his Neshoba County speech implies that he's "one of the guys" who are listening to him, just another fairgoer who came to Neshoba County in 1980. Where do we stand, confronted with this speech?

The appearance of stuffed animal puppets disrupts the political discourse, introducing an element of mockery, breaking the rhythm. The song, recorded live, with the sounds of the audience listening to Erykah Badu, blends the familiar tune of the chant of the psalm for the believer with the African-American singer's free interpretation of the lyrics. In this context, the same words take on different values and meanings. Love and hate are articulated, words that can be incarnated by us, the listener-viewers, or reprised by us, aimed at figures who are adored in a different way. The puppet is both a figurative representation, often used to deviate or camouflage critical political statements; it is also an ambivalent form, somewhere between accessory and sculpture, that plays upon the proximity (in terms of size) and strangeness (the accentuation of features). Here the rapport with manipulation through discourse is highlighted. McMillian creates profundity amongst the surface, going beyond mere projection. His work implicates the viewer through his critical use of architecture, leaving a vivid memory of his images.

<sup>1</sup> Jim Crow laws were promulgated in 1877 by the Southern states of America after the Civil War. It was a way for these states to continue their imperative to separate and segregate Black Americans, thus maintaining them in a state of inequality. Their goal was to restrain and prevent the enactment of their constitutional rights, namely the abolition of slavery (1865), full citizenship (1868), and the right to vote (1870). Jim Crow introduced the segregation of public services and limited interactions between people of color and whites, governed by the notion of "separate but equal." The Civil Rights Act of 1964, adopted by Lyndon B. Johnson, abolished these discriminatory statutes.



*Neshoba County Fair, 2012*



Rodney McMillian was born in Columbia, South Carolina in 1969. He lives and works in Los Angeles. After finishing his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago, he obtained a Masters in the Visual Arts at the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA in 2002.

### **ROOM 3 : ANNA WITTENBERG**

*Squarefoot*, 2020, video installation and sculptures (*Concrete Feet – The Drunk*), 15'16''

*The Drunk*, 2019, wood and metal

*Concrete Feet*, 2020, plastic shoes, bricks, epoxy clay, sand, GoPro camera, 33 x 17,8 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

*Squarefoot* is a polymorphous work that includes a set of three projections and three sculptures. It is a production created especially for this exhibition.

In order to view the different parts of the story, one must move to the center of the space. To do so, you walk around a person seated on a wooden chair with his back to the entrance. *The Drunk* is an articulated puppet attached to the chair. He is also the main character in the piece. Made up of standard sized logs, he only comes to life through the image and movements of operators, wearing hoods and black outfits, similar to the puppeteers of traditional Japanese Bunraku puppet theater.

Wittenberg allows us to see the structural make-up of the work: the GoPro cameras were used to film some of the action, wedged among the accessories supporting them (*Concrete Feet*).

These, in turn, are set on bases from which lateral projections extend. These images, projected at ground level, are multiplied through their reflections. This creates an immersive environment in which the visitor is led to feel their own steps. It establishes an immediate rapport of scale, completed by peripheral perception. Several strategies were used to conceive the whole. Firstly, that of filmed light. The "artificial sun" of the projector, whose intensity marks out a sense of temporality, from dawn to dusk, immerses us in a cinematic time. Then follow the various topologies: from a desert to a sports arena, by way of a bar. These scenes from our collective memory "as seen on TV" comprise a sort of filmed theater. Our familiar sense of surroundings is slowly disrupted by the contrivance itself. The scanning of alternate projections creates a space in which opacity has as much value as visibility. The absence of images is part of the narrative rupture that includes the wall, the dark, the real space itself. The diffracted nature of the story is accentuated by the split-screen effect, thus replayed across the three walls. It is then that the edge of the image, its contour, becomes blurred. Unlike a cinema, there is no screen, no monitor or flat frame, contrary to television. With the changing quality of the various images (high-speed, or GoPro), our senses are engaged as our visual habitus is foiled, eluded. We are no longer merely receptors or passing recorders of messages, but potential operators, free to take a stand. This freedom is assumed relative to the device. The projections on the ground and the asymmetry created by different scales reinforced by the precarious equilibrium of the whole and the inversion of the bases, induce a sense of vertigo. Like *The Drunk*, we lose our bearings. The ensemble is sculptural and cinematographical in equal measure, as well as object-oriented. In the exacerbated forms of the shoe-cameras, we recognize the baroque contours of one of the drawings at the entrance. The molded concrete that imprisons a green plastic shoe, perched upon the inclined base, itself reminiscent of the old boxes of shoe-shiners, also constitutes a tip of the hat to a contemporary history of sculpture that appropriates objects. The sounds of a chime that tinkles, a bit of wood that falls, a chair dragged across the ground, or a rooster crowing, form a mnemonic network that punctuates and spatializes the images. In a play on cinematic clichés, such as the intense sunlight cast by the projector in the beginning, or the position of the character at the bar, Wittenberg contradicts the imaginary universe of the Western by setting animals in the foreground. The pig, filmed in very high definition, offers a fascinating encounter with his long eyelashes or the smoothness of his coat. The rooster stars in the final scene. The scale of their images makes them into masterful, heroic, even superhuman figures compared to the disarticulated body of the puppet, or our own carcasses. The projection of the world in which we find ourselves allows us to contemplate the different levels of perception and refer to the hierarchical partition of an order that can be overturned at any moment. The immersion in the image comes from the side. The room does not have a fourth wall. Firstly, it forces us to think about levels of lateral bias. The space of the image appears to be curtailed by two lateral projections whose length corresponds to that of a body stretched out. The views of the ground, filmed "by the feet," undergo a scan of the step with the heavy shoe-

cameras. Thus we have a perspective that no one else has seen: there was no eye behind the lens. It is the camera itself that seems to have determined its own field of vision. Additionally, the high speed of the machine that recorded the pig is not perceptible to the human eye, it is slowed down to enable us to see. The alternating rhythm of the projections provokes a sense of expectation, we are on the *qui vive*. From whence will the next image come? The impossibility of capturing an “omni-image” from a central point (an isolated focus) means that one’s peripheral vision is engaged. Unlike the perspectivist conventions and the filmic imagination constructed from the unique point of view of the camera obscura, Wittenberg’s oeuvre considers video art post-screen, post-performance, and post-medium. They are not installations in the same sense as that defined in the 1980s or 1990s. They are saturated images that overflow from the screens and slide down the walls, taking on a sort of autonomy and creating their own borders. They exist in a milieu, an *Umwelt*, that considers other visions. Those of animals (do we not speak of a “bird’s-eye view” or a fisheye lens?), of the material (the wooden puppet), and a light that sometimes casts a shadow. Angles, recesses, obscurity and the invisible: all have as much presence here as the images along which we have attached ourselves. And, since we are walking towards them, we turn amidst them, and come to understand, little by little, that one does not require a screen to have an image, nor a frame to signal a shot, but we have the soles of our feet and a back. Our skeletons create a structure for this volume of images that surrounds us, even as our movement reveals it.



*Squarefoot*, 2020



*Concrete Foot*, 2020

Anna Wittenberg (born in 1985, in Houston, Texas) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles. She obtained a BA in Media Studies from Pitzer College in 2008 and a Masters in Visual Arts from the University of California, Riverside in 2017.

#### **ROOM 4 : NATHANIEL MELLORS**

*Our House -1 (Time)*, 2015-2016, video, 59'. Courtesy of the artist & Crèvecoeur, Paris

*Neanderthal Restyle*, 2016, resin, straw, paint, polymerized plaster, 58 x 58 x 25 cm. Courtesy of the artist & Crèvecoeur, Paris

*Reliquary Reliquary (Degenerate Cycle)*, 2016, resin, straws, paint, polymerized plaster, silicone, hairs, plexiglas, wood, 180 x 51 x 41 cm. Courtesy of the artist & Crèvecoeur, Paris

As we move along the corridor, we are invited to advance to see the film, which is projected laterally. This time, we must enter the room in order to seat ourselves on the bench facing the projection. On either side of this seating, two diametrically opposed bases present two busts. *Reliquary, Reliquary (Degenerate Cycle)*, 2016 and *Neanderthal Restyle*, 2016. Two sculptures in painted resin, one featuring colored plastic straws, the other an agglutinated concretion, seem

to have just popped out of the film and are both simultaneously reminiscent of classic statuary and film props.

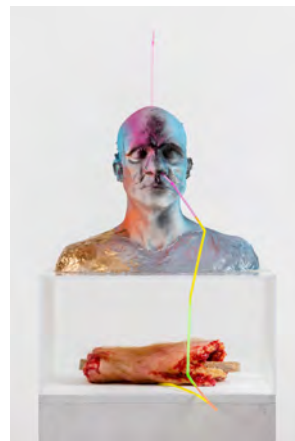
The video *Ourhouse-1 (Time)* follows a cycle that the artist began for the BBC a decade ago. It combines relating to history as an unfettered journey through time with the recurrence of a Neanderthal figure. The actors have a familiar air because we have seen them in recent popular films and series (*Harry Potter*, *Game of Thrones*), which induces a sense of uncanniness. Caricatured personalities and scenes of an historical nature are juxtaposed with temporal jumbles that call to mind the anti-narrative styles of Monty Python or Dr. Who. Behind the humor, there is a real meta-historical approach that is in keeping with contemporary scientific discourse. Have we not recently discovered that our genetic heritage still includes the presence of Neanderthal DNA?

Nathaniel Mellors shifts and inverts the roles between objects (incidental accessories) that are actors bearing stories, and characters that can be manipulated as objects. Generally, he writes a script from which he makes a film. This process generates objects. Sometimes, they are literally “post-performance.” Sometimes, it's more flexible, such as making accessories then creating sculptures with them, or with elements that have not been used. *Ourhouse-1 (Time)* questions the reversibility of time. This stems from the premise of relativity, inducing a non-linear relationship with history. Characters take off on “staycations” in a permanent and constrained present which echoes the situation that we have all experienced with confinement. Domestic objects become possible vehicles for transcending temporal limitations. In another episode of the series, a character called *The Object*

is voraciously reading a book entitled *The Eternal Present*, that we in turn discover. Here, the toilet bowl complete with shit constitutes the recycling of our memorial heritage, as filtered by our microbiota. Beyond the predisposition towards the comic lingers a deeper reflection on biopolitics and the intrusive manipulation of bodies by science.



*Ourhouse -1 (Time)*, 2015-2016



*Reliquary Reliquary (Degenerate Cycle)*, 2016

Nathaniel Mellors (born in 1974 in Doncaster, United Kingdom) studied at the University of Oxford's Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art and at the Royal College of Art in London. In 2007–2008, he was an artist-in-residence at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. In 2011, he was awarded the Cobra Prize by the Cobra Museum in Amstelveen. He lives and works in Los Angeles.

## **ROOM 5 : COLEMAN COLLINS**

*The Anxiety of incompleteness*, 2019, HD video, 6'. Courtesy of the artist.

*Rêveuse (extrait)*, 2020, Valchromat, 60 x 90 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

The *Anxiety of Incompleteness* is a stop-motion video that consists of installing immobile objects in different places and filming the mise en scènes one after the other in still format (like a photo), moving the objects between each shot. The end-to-end montage lends the illusion of movement, producing a staccato projection. Little angel figurines are projected, blown-up to the size of the children that seem to face us from the back of the room. The magnified eyes of the statuettes bring to mind advertisements or Manga-style cartoons. A music track accompanies the film in constant replay. The first impression is one of cuteness, but with the passage of time, the film becomes a source of reflection on “what is not there,” the missing object or the source of the difference. The title provides some insight as well. What anxiety are they talking about? What non-fulfillment? The little angels form a group that turns. Then one notices that one of them has a broken wing. Little by little, we see that they are cast aside, rejected by the group. What is an angel without wings, or with one wing, who can no longer fly?

One could quibble over belief with the angels, as well as the use of winged figures as a favorite substitute. Here, the intent is not centered upon belief and supernatural entities, it is more of an allegory of an economy of belief hijacked for political ends. The anxiety of non-fulfillment resides in the fear of the loss of unity, of the “whole” that represents the pseudo-integrity of purity. The underlying message of this intent is the will to deny difference in support of, for example, a univocal concept of a nation. The artist is referring to the text *Fear of Small Numbers-An Essay on The Geography of Anger*, d'Arjun Appadurai, 2006, Duke University Press. This analytical critique of Freud's thesis that concerns group interactions is applied to nation states. If there is a minority in a group (State), it is no longer complete. This speaks to the notions of unicity and purity upheld by Fascist mentalities. The anxiety engendered by such difference challenges the concept of a mono-identity, possibly provoked by the existence of these minor differences. Nevertheless, the work is not confined to the illustration of a thesis in images. The repetitive music creates a fascinating and digressive continuous audio loop. Based on the principle of a range of sinusoidal sounds developed by Roger Shepard in 1964, the rhythm is hypnotic and haunting. Collins sets the principle of repetition (ritornello) in motion, as analyzed by Gilles Deleuze (*Difference and Repetition*, 1968). Asymmetrical synthesis comes from a light deviation or discrepancy that is respiration or a movement of life. Collins uses sound to re-enact the principle of small differences that lends structure to the film, playing upon tonal intervals such as concentric waves.

The artist also works on questions of production economics that use techniques for constructing virtual images and their current production methods. The drawing is conceived from the outset as a volume, which no longer implies the perspective translation of a 3D shape into its 2D illusion translated by perspective, but its development in awareness of its different faces, in volume. The software used creates an algorithm that will design the objects in order to allow their shaping either by a 3D printer or by a laser milling machine on wood. In both cases, we will extrude shapes and extract patterns which are high reliefs. The work is constructed by abductions, by what is not there, minus, what is excluded or removed but which persists, "ex-sist". In addition to engaging with the history of sculpture and drawing (from grisaille to relief to the roundabout), Coleman Collins designs and produces innovative objects, which are both drawn and molded, in the same process. In addition, the production economy thinks the drawing in volume (layers of carbon filaments for the 3D printer) or in hollow (laser milling machine which burns the material in points or hollows out lines in the Valchromat which is a fiber board composite wood). It is a thought of form which first determines a volume in a surface. The depth of the shot, which itself is always finely striated, varies according to the artist's choice. Thickness, in either case, is an artistic decision. The algorithm evacuates colors in order to preserve the shadows on the very light pearl gray. This process forms an agglomerate of random hues. These colors will compose the “found painting” of the screen printing seen in Room 1: *Ensemble*, color screen printing on dibond, 2020.

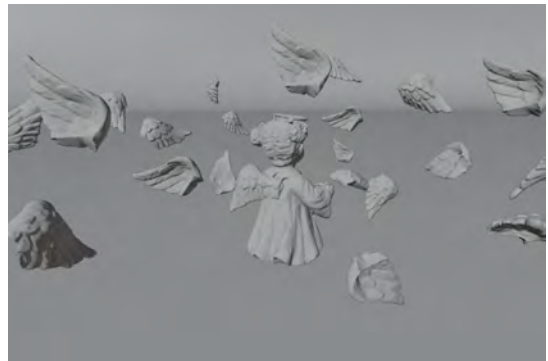


To commemorate the exhibition, Coleman Collins has presented Carré d'Art with a limited edition of one of his drawings, *Rêveuse*. Twenty-five signed and numbered print reproductions are available at the Museum Shop.

Coleman Collins is an interdisciplinary artist and writer from Stone Mountain, Georgia, born in 1986. His work addresses questions linked to the history of the world, debt and social relations. Recent exhibitions include *Nothing Special*, Los Angeles; Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York; *It'd los angeles*, Los Angeles; Artspace, New Haven and Human Resources, Los Angeles. He obtained a Masters in Fine Arts from UCLA in 2018 and was an artist in residence in 2017 at the Skowhegan School for Painting and Sculpture. He lives in New York, where he participated in an independent study program at the Whitney Museum (2019).



*The Anxiety of incompleteness*, 2019



*Rêveuse*, 2020

# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Open from Tuesday through Sunday from 10am to 6pm

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2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Place de la Maison Carrée - 30000 Nîmes

Tel. : +33 (0)4 66 76 35 70  
Fax : +33 (0)4 76 35 85  
Email : [info@carreartmusee.com](mailto:info@carreartmusee.com)  
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