

Art in America



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developed a coiling trunk that seemed to mirror the forms of the freeway arteries. Ryan made her twenty-foot work in the gallery, and it was destroyed at the exhibition's end. While Charles Ray, with whom the artist studied at UCLA, removed a decomposing California redwood and reproduced it in Japanese cypress for his sculpture *Hinoki* (2007), Ryan's palm remains where she found it.

Complementing the tree, two palm fronds (taken from another tree) cast in iron, both titled *Wisp (Carrie Furnace)*, sat on the floor nearby. Ryan brought a rubber mold of the leaves from California to the historic Carrie Furnaces in Pennsylvania to have these works poured. Once responsible for more than 60 percent of the country's iron production, the furnaces are now open periodically for educational demonstrations. Hanging in the same room, *Pearls* convincingly approximates a necklace in giant scale using pink bowling balls strung together with rope. Procured from eBay and Craigslist, the balls bear the marks of previous owners—an engraving of "Andrea" or "Deb," a decorative pattern of mawkish swooping hearts—serving as reminders of how the items were once treasured. The necklace draped over a wall into the next gallery, where the rope was broken as if it had been ripped off a wearer's neck.

The feral parrots that fly over Southern California—a phenomenon that arose after parrots were released from the Busch Gardens theme park when it was turned into a brewery in the 1970s—were the subject of two works in the show. For these, Ryan made versions of the parrots in mottled, glazed clay, their tails drooping down, perhaps as a sign of their rough city life. A pair sit on a ledge in an untitled piece, and in *Parasol* a group rests on a steel umbrella-like object instead of a tree. As with the depictions of birds in Greek funerary memorials or Dutch *vanitas* paintings, these parrots remind us of the transformative power of time.

—Jennifer S. Li

PORTLAND, ORE.

MARIA ANTELMAN Melanie Flood Projects

The title of Maria Antelman's exhibition at Melanie Flood Projects, "My Touch, Your Command, Your Touch, My Command," alluded to the mutually influential relationships between machines and their users. The gallery's front room contained a number of works that use images of microfilm terminals to present the human body as both operator and tool, as both architect of information and piece of information architecture. The sculpture *Eyecon* (2014) has an obliquely utilitarian form: part obelisk, part lectern. A photograph of a terminal whose screen displays a grid of human eyes is affixed to the slanted top, the machine looking back at us from a reclined position. Hung on surrounding walls were photomontages from the artist's "Spacesaver" series (2016). Made using a combination of digital and analog photographs, the "Spacesaver" images show human hands carrying out simple gestures in front of microfilm terminals or on their screens or, in especially disorienting examples, in a combination thereof. In *Spacesaver I*, a user's hands adjust settings on a terminal while also, engaged in somewhat different actions, appearing on-screen in a nested composition suggesting video feedback. In *Spacesaver III*, the



Maria Antelman:
Spacesaver I, 2016,
C-print, 43 by 28
inches; at Melanie
Flood Projects.

screen of an unmanned terminal shows hands elegantly winding a roll of film. The image suggests a sort of daydream or a scene pictured in a thought bubble, but it is unclear to whom this vision belongs: a mechanized user or an anthropomorphized machine. Antelman's blurring of roles brings to mind the behavior of touch screens, which put people in the position of constantly attending to the very devices that are supposed to be attending to them.

While Antelman's "Spacesaver" images visualize scenarios in which human operators appear flattened and processed as film, her split-screen video *The Repeater* (2015), shown in the next room, explores the psychological quandaries that arise from such disembodiments. The video presents photographs of equipment belonging to amateur radio operators on a remote island, the images appearing in pairs that sync or stagger. A voice-over directs the viewer to visualize a scenario in which a person comes into contact with a duplicate who shares all her memories, thoughts, experiences, and tastes. "There is one you here and another you there," the voice counsels. "You are the person here, and that other person there with your personality is also you."

The audio track carried from the smaller screening room into the main gallery, intermingling with the images of human hands being incorporated into microfilm terminals. Together, the works reflect a society that has lost its grip on information. Antelman's pieces involving analog information machines of the past provide an archaeology of gestures: she excavates forgotten actions like rolling film, packing slides into trays, tuning a dial to catch a radio signal. The act of touching information through objects that help deliver it once gave us hope of controlling that information, or at least maintaining our identities amid the maelstrom of technological duplication. The science-fiction scenario described in *The Repeater* is hypothetical, but we already have real, virtual doubles in the petabytes of personal information stored beyond our immediate reach in proprietary black boxes. In the age of big data, we all live with other versions of ourselves located there.

—Robert Rhee