

MOMU & NO ES

*Plural Being: I Am the Others, the Others are Me*

Espai13 Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona

January 19th - March 3rd 2017

Pie fuera. Expediciones y diásporas curated by Jordi Antas

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## Being Singular Plural

When I was invited to write a text about the exhibition *Plural Being: I Am the Others, the Others are Me* by Spanish artists duo Momu & No Es (Lucía Moreno and Eva Noguera), the exhibition had already ended for quite a while. For not having seen the exhibition myself, I had to turn to online documentation to get an idea. But to see the exhibition online by scrolling through my screen actually made a lot of sense in this case. The exhibition title refers to the individual as a product of the community and it makes me think of one of the main themes in Jean-Luc Nancy's work: the question of our being together in contemporary society. In *Being Singular Plural* (*Être singulier pluriel*) Nancy deals with the question how we can still speak of a 'we', without transforming this 'we' into a substantial and exclusive identity. What are the conditions to speak of a 'we' or an 'I' in today's hyperconnected age?

We can hardly take our eyes off our smartphones in daily life. Since the technological developments have progressed increasingly, a new generation has been formed under the name: "generation HD". This stands for Generation Head Down and it owes its name to always looking down to check the latest updates on the smartphone. We are awaiting a decade in which hyperconnectivity will take over the world. Hyperconnectivity is a term invented by Canadian social scientists Anabel Quan-Haase and Barry Wellman, arising from their studies of person-to-person and person-to-machine communication in networked organizations and networked societies. An increasing number of people have an increasing number of connections with others via the devices they use. How that will effect today's society is something that Momu & No Es carefully try to answer with their poetic and absurd art works. Every work has an ambiguous and witty title which is whispered through the exhibition space like a mantra.

*I Really Can See You* is the first work you would encounter (and hear!) upon descending the stairs and entering the exhibition room. The floor depicts the face of a man, who is wearing glasses with mirrors. These so-called 'Lazy Glasses' are glasses with angled mirrors inside so you can watch TV (or read a book) on your back without having to strain your neck to see the screen in front of you. The huge staring eyes located beneath the stairs are watching you step by step and give off the 'Big Brother is watching you' vibe. Who is the 'I' and who is the 'you' in the title of the work: *I Really Can See You* makes no great difference. Since the ominous work refers to the individual being under constant observation (surveillance) and the individual observing the 'other' also back (social media). The work sets the tone for the rest of the exhibition where the individual works in their own way analyze the use of digital technology on our body and mind.

After the first work of the enlarged image of the head, more body parts appear through the exhibition space. Like the enormous hand in *I Entirely Understand* that represents the OK gesture. But since the hand is closely placed to a cut-out of a woman in yoga position, it looks like the hand is about to launch the unaware and zen woman. Or *P.P.I. Postvivos, Predescompuestos and Influencers* which depicts a gigantic male body builder torso holding an actual television screen. The video on the screen shows different models and influencers advertising products. The whole marketing and advertising world has changed rapidly by the arrival of social media influencers: the hip and trendy bloggers and celebrities who get paid for posting pictures of the products on their Instagram and Facebook pages. Behind the torso one could see a wall filling image of a panoramic

landscape at sunset. On the panoramic view an elongated floating pillow is photoshopped and is suspended in mid-air. *Pillow Awareness* refers to the so-called 'body pillows' and 'boyfriend pillows' which gives comfort and support to the user but will also figure as emotional substitutes. In an increasingly digital world physical contact is not always evident.

Society's relationship to technology is described among others by theorist Bruno Latour and its sociological theory: Actor-network theory. It is distinguished from other network theories in that an actor-network contains not merely people, but objects and organizations. Actor-network theory claims that any actor, whether person, object (including computer software, hardware, and technical standards), or organization, is equally important to a social network. As such, societal order is an effect caused by an actor network running smoothly. This order begins to break down when certain actors are removed. For example, the removal of telephones, banks or the president may all result in significant break-downs in social order. If there was no social media Justin Bieber would never have rose to stardom. In 2013 the then 19-year-old pop star hit the headlines when he appeared to spit on a group of adoring fans who were standing in the street and screaming up at him while he stood on the balcony of his hotel in Toronto. Images were posted online of the fans down below which suggested Justin may have been offering them his saliva as some sort of modern day autograph or a special gift. Bieber has always denied the spitting incident and claimed the whole thing was a hoax. Weather he was spitting on the crowd or not, the images circulating the internet are characteristic for todays obsession with celebrities.

When I look at the last work of the exhibition *Everyone Starting New Exciting Stage of Life Except You* I think of this incident. The work, a cut-out of a drop of water hanging from the ceiling, not only looks like Bieber's saliva, but also refers to Bieber's exciting and glamorous life to me. And the not so glamorous lives of his fans and the common people. In our hyperconnected society we are never alone. We are all individual and plural at the same time. #BeingPlural

Text: Julia Gerlings

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