



**Ahlam Shibli** untitled  
(*Occupation* no. 23), al-Khalil/  
Hebron, Palestine 2016–17  
Chromogenic print  
40 x 60 cm © AHLAM SHIBLI

The house of the Hashem and Nisreen Azzeh family, Othman ben Affan Street, Tel Rumeida, al-Khalil, December 4, 2016.

The three children of Hashem Azzeh—Younis, Khaled and Hanan—together with their cousin Ahmad. They are watching a technician install a television set, donated by a Danish solidarity delegation. Hashem Azzeh was killed by

the Israeli Defense Forces on October 21, 2015, poisoned by tear gas that was used in a clash between young Palestinians and Israeli forces.

OPPOSITE PAGE: **Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Tristan Bera** *Belle comme le jour* (still) 2012 HD film with single-channel HD video projector 13 min COURTESY THE ARTISTS/ESTHER SCHIPPER, BERLIN

to some of the more conceptual and abstract works in adjacent rooms. Initially presented at Documenta 14, these powerful photographs record the changes imposed on urban landscapes and public spaces in the wake of expanded settlements in the West Bank. Accompanied by detailed descriptive texts, Shibli's images catalogue the physical and psychological barriers that are the day-to-day reality of a domestically fortified existence. In its context, the image of a hand holding up a photograph of a green field, pre-destruction, in front of a family home's window, is a gesture not only of nostalgia but also of defiance. It's provocative work, and its inclusion in the exhibition—along with other risk-taking curatorial choices, such as Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Tristan Bera's short film *Belle comme le jour* (2012) or Paulo Nazareth's *Anthropology of black II* (2014)—is perhaps a welcome indication of the curatorial direction Burke and Guimarães intend to take with the new museum. Blockbuster draws like Picasso may get viewers in the door, but it's the challenging, politically and socially charged work by contemporary artists like Shibli that will send them home thinking.

Guimarães argues that "'Field Guide' advocates and calls for dissent." This is a strong statement. Whether or not the exhibition completely reached this objective remains open to debate. There is, however, an exciting opportunity for the Remai Modern to spark a genuine dialogue between the Prairies, the rest of Canada and the international scene by pursuing its curatorial strategy of staging thought-provoking domestic works alongside those created globally. Works by contemporary artists from Quebec—noticeably absent from this exhibition—might be a good place to start. Whatever the Remai's future might hold, the commitment to investigating the dialectic between contemporary and past works found in "Field Guide" is a promising start. —JEAN-PHILIPPE DENEALUT

## "AFTERLIVES"

OR GALLERY, VANCOUVER

The quiet British lilt of Sir David Attenborough murmured in the background as the soothing sounds of *Planet Earth* filled the exhibition. The noise spilled out from Aron Louis Cohen's *Exploded View (Planet Earth)* (2017), a deconstructed flat-screen TV that exposed the guts of the ubiquitous home electronic. The internal components were strung like a puppet: hung from a lattice above and rested on a kitchen table below. Each layer, typically compressed into a flat screen, had been carefully disassembled so that the BBC documentary continued to play. Rent apart to reveal its insides and creatively reassembled anew, the TV offers a metaphor for the exhibition as a whole.

"Afterlives," as its title suggests, revels in transformation—but the muscle memories of the original objects suffuse their new life as art. Germaine Koh's *Takeaways* (2017) and Cohen's *Greetings From: State Change, 21 to 1500* (2017),



**Germaine Koh** *Takeaways*  
(detail) 2017 Plastics,  
foodstuffs, documentation,  
correspondence and wood  
crate 60.9 x 60.9 x 60.9 cm  
PHOTO SITE PHOTOGRAPHY

## REVIEWS

which were cleverly installed using their shipping crates, were made by transmuting items the artists sent each other, along with explanatory letters, well in advance of the show. Koh handed Cohen a cargo of tourist T-shirts (which he crafted into cotton-rag postcards), and Cohen repaid the gift by posting Koh several months' worth of plastic used in his daily life. She transformed these odds and ends by cooking the plastic together with foodstuffs into inedible lollies, pastilles and ice cream sandwiches.

The saccharine aftertaste of the crate exchange lingers beyond the noxious treats: it's a light-hearted, even quirky, approach to recycling at odds with some of the artists' underlying concerns. In *Takeaways*, Koh includes two of the letters sent during the exchange, which chart the pair's shifting fascination, apathy and discomfort toward "this plastic stuff" and the weight of its material impact from an individual to a global level. "[The plastics'] light weight belies how heavy a presence your containers became for me," writes Koh, pointing to her new awareness of this pervasive substance.

In Koh's 2017 *Roadkill* series, things become grave, sinister. It's impossible, looking at the wall-mounted tire treads that comprise the work, to forget that we are in a global garbage crisis. Humans generated 44.7 million metric tonnes of electronic waste in 2016 and recycled only 20 per cent. We will see more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050 if trends continue. In "Afterlives," Koh and Cohen reimagine the accumulating detritus of our throwaway lives without pretending to provide solutions to our possible impending doom. The resulting uneasiness is the ultimate takeaway from this exhibition. There is a long road still to travel before our apathy around waste production gives way to the fear required to enact real transformation. —KATHERINE DENNIS

## CALL ME BY YOUR NAME

LUCA GUADAGNINO, FRENESY FILM COMPANY ET AL., 2017

If secular, contemporary sin is to deliberately harm or misinform—rather than to act on impulse, passion or frailty—then it is no sin to be mesmerized by the lusciousness of director Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me by Your Name*. Those who have, for instance, spent any of their summers in Italy will feel as if they can smell, taste and touch their memories through the screen. It is also no sin to be moved by the film's tale of relatively forbidden gay love. Seventeen-year-old Elio (Timothée Chalamet) desires 24-year-old student Oliver (Armie Hammer), who visits Elio's academic parents in 1980s northern Italy on a research fellowship. The two's relationship is requited until Oliver leaves, and both confront the homophobic dictates of the day.

*Call Me by Your Name's* tender, yearning world comes at a cost; its romance is built on elision. The film's two lead actors may be straight, but Guadagnino is in fact gay, as is screenwriter James Ivory, of Merchant-Ivory fame (*A Room with a View*, *Maurice*, *Remains of the Day*). Still, Guadagnino has told the *Hollywood Reporter* that he avoided explicit sex scenes because he wanted the film to have a "powerful universality," while Ivory's idea of gay love comes from the old literary temperaments of E.M. Forster, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde and others, for whom gayness was elevated, homosocial, white, Athenian.

The women in *Call Me by Your Name* are thus barely there, either objects whom Elio and Oliver sexually humour (Oliver's hetero-crush is essentially the town tramp), or Elio's mother, quiet throughout, who, according to her husband, does not really know about, and cannot fully understand, her son's same-sex desire. The film ends, penultimately, with Elio's father telling him that Elio and Oliver are exceptional humans, and ultimately, with Oliver's announcement of his marriage to a woman. The tragedy is conspicuously neoliberal: if only those such as Elio and



Still from Luca Guadagnino's 2017 film *Call Me by Your Name*  
COURTESY TIFF

Oliver could be their truest, best selves, if only they could marry and have a family, society would be all the better for it.

Where are gay films that depict what happens after coming out—that resist gay exceptionalism to speak truth to the failings of gay love in the context of toxic masculinity? Where are gay films in which women are not neutered sidekicks, nurturers or divas? Where are gay films starring gay people? Where are gay films happening now? (Barry Jenkins's superior, rare 2016 film *Moonlight* ticks many of these boxes.) Watching *Call Me by Your Name* as a gay man, I felt cold, alienated and utterly unheard.

—DAVID BALZER

**Florie Stettheimer**  
*Self Portrait with Palette (Painter and Faun)* n.d.  
Oil on canvas 1.52 x 1.82 m  
ART PROPERTIES, AVERY

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ESTATE OF ETTIE STETTMEYER,  
1967 (1967.17.16)

