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I N T E R N A T I O N A L





that can colonize our minds can also create new means of resistance. By focusing on black identity while simultaneously doubling and complicating it, Dean implies that the way to overcome colonial history is to embrace difference while using the tools of mass media to oppose racism's violent effects.

—Matthew Biro

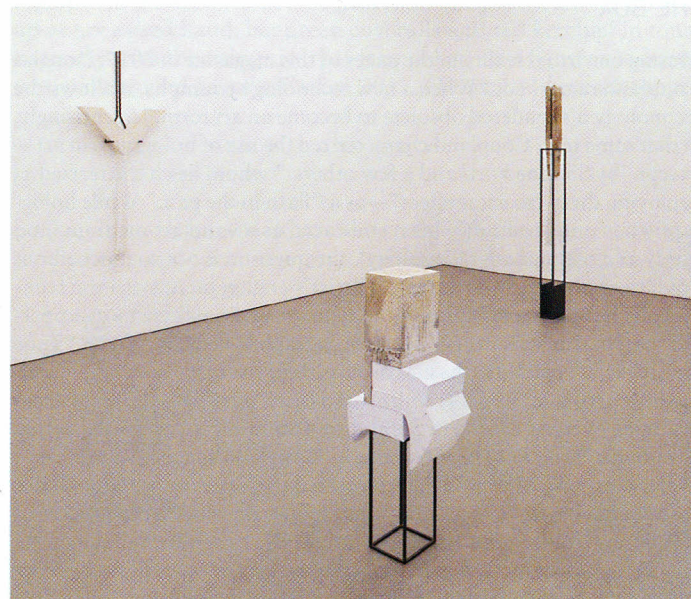
CHICAGO

Lucas Simões

PATRON

“*Corpos de Prova*” (Bodies of Proof), Lucas Simões’s first exhibition at Patron, conjured a stark, almost antiseptic atmosphere, its compressive sculptures evenly spaced throughout the gallery. In pieces such as *White Lies 14* (all works 2017), stacks of nonarchival computer paper—destined to curl and yellow over time—were pressed beneath or between rectangular or polygonal concrete slabs. Most of the unforgiving assemblages were in turn suspended on the wall or held aloft by empty metal rectangular prisms. These objects could be regarded as bravura meditations on interdependence, grounded in a systematic set of revelations about paper’s weight-bearing capacities. In that sense, Simões’s works could also be considered structures with affinities to architecture, albeit at a reduced scale, rather than models per se.

A trained architect who gave up his practice in favor of sculpture, Simões has utilized concrete since 2013. This choice of material stems from his long-standing interest in Brutalism’s signature *béton brut*, or raw concrete, hulking or suspended in weighty volumes, which marked the movement’s departure from International Style’s machine aesthetic. Simões previously researched the London archives of Alison and Peter Smithson (who were considered leaders of the New Brutalism), and has also learned from key examples closer to his home country of Brazil. São Paulo, in particular, has a rich Brutalist tradition that includes the many public and private buildings of João Batista Vilanova Artigas, Lina Bo Bardi, and Paulo Mendes da Rocha. Architecture scholar Guilherme Wisnik recently argued that Brazilian Brutalism circa 1970 represented a utopian attempt at creating “a more candid and generous new sociability inside buildings” in the midst of the country’s repressive dictatorship. Landmarks in this genre, such as Artigas and Carlos



View of “Lucas Simões,” 2017–18. From left: *Abismo n.83*, 2017; *White Lies 14*, 2017; *Abismo n.86*, 2017. Photo: Tim Johnson.

in *True Red Ruin (Elmina Castle)*. Printed with an ambiguous pattern that suggests both faux marbling and the movement of waves, it recalls a network of transatlantic shipping in which slavery flourished.

The cutouts are arranged beneath two ceiling-mounted wide-screen monitors; they appear to represent the coast of Africa as seen by a colonizer aboard a ship pulling into harbor. Graphic and cartoonlike, they incorporate reinterpreted images of the castle alongside fragments of early modern European maps of the area. On adjacent walls, two framed grids of drawings, *The Landscape* and *The Castle*, both 2017, show how Dean altered the historical woodcuts and etchings of water, landscape, and architecture into backdrops and animations for her video, another component of *True Red Ruin (Elmina Castle)*, which carries the video’s title.

While the sculptures and drawings examine colonial exploitation directly through appropriated visuals, Dean’s video explores it personally by mining her family history to interrogate colonialism’s lasting effects. In a disturbing, allegorical, nearly ten-minute narrative, Dean—who was born in the United States but raised in England—“colonizes” the affordable housing complex in Houston where her younger half sister, Ashstress Agwunobi, lives.

The story unfolds as a kind of reality drama: It begins as Dean is planning to install a red cardboard castle display in the courtyard of the historically black community. Characters explain in interviews what is happening at the castle or what they are doing in response. Through various types of alienating effects—fake objects and backdrops, live action mixed with text and animated drawings, and split screens that reveal other elements of the set design—the video weaves a colonial narrative into the interactions of two blood relatives. As the story develops, we scrutinize the half sisters’ differing appearances, accents, and actions, wondering which of their many differences are a result of the African diaspora and which are simply “normal” variations not influenced by colonial history.

If, as writers as diverse as W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke, and Paul Gilroy have argued, “double consciousness” lies at the heart of black experience, then art that explores this mode of existence is vital. What makes *True Red Ruin (Elmina Castle)* so compelling is how powerfully it speaks to questions of interpellation and resistance—of being defined by a dehumanizing, capitalist, and racist system on the one hand, and growing, developing, and asserting one’s selfhood on the other. As Dean’s video unfolds, the actresses are shown to be videotaping themselves, and sometimes surveilling one another, while the environment comes filled with an increasing number of cameras and monitors. How power relations can change over time, the video suggests; the same tools

Cascaldi's Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo (1961–69) and Bo Bardi's Museu de Arte de São Paulo (1957–68), feature massive concrete slabs positioned atop vast open spaces, as if sheltering provisional publics. Completed at the end of the *abertura*, Brazil's transition to democracy, Bo Bardi's Centro de Lazer Fábrica da Pompéia (1977–86) refigured Brutalism in the guise of public space itself: The recreation facility was accessible to all classes. These experiments seem almost idealistic when considered alongside the challenges of contemporary Brazil, which has regressed into a new authoritarianism that has ousted a democratically elected president and unleashed angry mobs at political demonstrations and art exhibitions alike. This fraught national history and dismal present feel literally condensed into Simões's sculptures—compacted, placed under pressure.

While linking his materials to Brutalist histories at home and abroad, Simões is no representational artist, and therein lies his strength. That his architectonic impulse is toward operations rather than models is what allows him to cross-reference art-historical precedents as well, rather than fetishizing specific buildings in an overtly “research-based practice.” Consider the wall pieces *Abismo n.80* and *Abismo n.83*, in which two trapezoidal slabs—merging into a hexagon in the former and into a downward chevron in the latter—pinch together to hold dangling strips of delicate architectural tracing paper. One thinks of fellow Paulista Mira Schendel's *Trenzinho* (Little Train), 1965, a long ream of rice paper suspended by cotton thread across a gallery corner. The delicacy and lightness of that different era's experiment collides here not only with architecture's materiality but also with the discipline's habit of testing and pressing matter into functionality. In Simões's hands, these materials evoke a grim present, one captured most viscerally by *corpo de prova 29*, in which a sea cucumber-like section of brown cloth, its bottom dipped in gray cement, sits suspended in a cylindrical vitrine. Like its paper counterparts, this fragile object seems hopelessly imprisoned by its obdurate constraints.

—Daniel Quiles

LOS ANGELES

Simone Forti

THE BOX

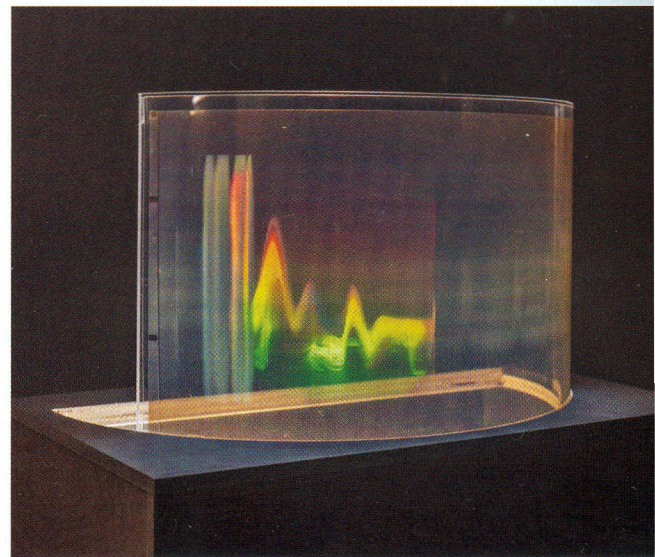
Musing on virtual reality in the pages of this magazine in 2017, Douglas Coupland remarked, “When a new technology triumphs, it allows the technology it's rendered obsolete to become an art form.” Surprisingly, in that same text, Coupland characterized the use of holograms in art—except “by Simone Forti and a few others,” whom he characterized as deploying them “to great effect”—as a “flash in the pan.” While holography has only hesitantly been embraced as a valid art medium (and rarely as a triumphant technology), the question is not so much about novelty as about the depth of an artist's engagement with the technique. The apotheosis of holography in art was nowhere more apparent than in this selection of seven holographic works by Forti: “Time Smear” challenged such casual dismissals of the medium while revealing how artists masterfully utilize (and often push forward) new technologies even as their practical and potential applications are in development (and not yet obsolete, as Coupland suggested).

Between 1975 and 1978, Forti created these precisely crafted holograms with Lloyd G. Cross, a physicist who developed the process of combining holography and cinematography to produce moving 3-D images. Cross translated individual film frames of the artist's choreographies into a series of vertical lines etched into Plexiglas and illuminated

with laser light, which when viewed from a certain angle appear stereoscopically reconstitute the original moving image. Many of the resulting works were first exhibited at Sonnabend Gallery in New York in 1978 and had not been seen since.

Displayed on minimal wooden bases at the Box, each of the sculptures was electrically illuminated from below, creating a legio glowing, aquarium-like objects, each containing an image of the young Forti animated by a rainbow spectrum of light. To “activate” the hologram—that is, to see the linear, cinematographic motion of the dancer captured therein—one was required to stretch, stoop, or and weave around the sculpture, as the pictured movement appeared inscribed onto the moving bodies of the viewers themselves. The abstracted body flickered, soft at the edges, like a flame; when Forti debuted these works, she lit them with candlelight.

Forti's established approach toward dance—which incorporated understated, improvisatory gestures and was conceived alongside artists such as Robert Morris and Yvonne Rainer—seems well suited to a medium that at once encompasses film, photography, and sculpture. In fact, the artist considered her early “Dance Construction” 1960–61, to be as much sculpture as performance, predicated on an understanding of the body as a formal composition in space. Her 1971 dance construction *Huddle*, for example, which was performed as the hologram *Huddle* (all holographic works 1975–78), involved a group of dancers interlocked as a hunched-over unit while one body dislodges itself and climbs up over the pile. As a hologram, the work simultaneously refers to a live performance, a conceptual sculptural plastic art, a photographic document, and an optical illusion.



Other works on view exploited the more enigmatic qualities of holography: *Big Jump on Back*—if viewed from left to right—depicts the crouching artist jumping and landing in a plank position, then rolling over onto her back and eventually settling with her legs in the air. Due to irregularities in the technical process, the artist's body is rendered momentarily distorted during the sequence, dematerializing entirely into an inchworm-like array of wavy lines and multiple limbs. This glitchy body blur is what the artist calls a “time smear,” and the warping of holo-cinematographic 3-D time-space, it demands a nuanced looking, an intimate dance of temporal subtlety with the object. In a moment when big data drives so much of our experience of time, these lovely, smeary objects importantly spoke to a virtuality derived from a very different reality.

—Catherine