

Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong SOHO

Mass:

REVITAL COHEN & TUUR VAN BALEN solo exhibition



REVITAL COHEN & TUUR VAN BALEN b. 1981

Untitled (Almost Rubaya), 2015. Copper, nickel, tin, and gold on bronze, 20 x 20 cm (7 7/8 x 7 7/8 in.)

Exhibition Dates 9 June–15 July, 2016
Monday–Saturday, noon–7pm; Sunday, noon–5pm
Venue Pearl Lam Galleries Hong Kong SOHO
No. 1, G/F & 1/F, SOHO 189, 189 Queen's Road West, Sheung Wan

Hong Kong— Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present *Mass*, the first solo exhibition of London-based artists Revital Cohen and Tuur Van Balen in Hong Kong, curated by David Ho Yeung Chan. The exhibition title alludes to the quantities and nature of the materials and labour used in industrial production. *Mass* also questions the spiritual presence of the matter on display and the exhibition as a ceremonial site that consecrates an art object with cultural capital.

Revital Cohen (b. 1981, Jerusalem, Israel) and Tuur Van Balen (b. 1981, Leuven, Belgium) work collaboratively producing objects, installations and films that examine relationships between industrial production, culture and politics. The works in the show are occupied with raw natural resources, processes of conversion, immaterial geologies, entropy and industrial language. Their long-term research surrounding the invisible links between mining in the Congo and the mass-production process of Chinese manufacturing explores “the processes of becoming between the excavated raw matter and replicable objects of desire in another reality.”

Cohen and Van Balen write, "The transformations of things across dreams and geologies, through planetary leaps as economic forces, push deep into the soil to unearth animal and mineral matter or look up towards mining the moon, in circular motions from ashes to gold to dust."

The selection of artworks on view offers geopolitical readings of materials that comprise industrial objects and immaterial connections. Cohen and Van Balen reflect on the impact of industrialisation on the generation of the "curse of natural resources", where the mass underneath the ground determines the lives of all above it. The exhibited works address, in the artists' words, "tensions between manufactured landscapes and the landscapes of manufacturing". The term "manufactured landscapes" refers to the transformation of raw materials into art objects (or an embodiment of artificial landscapes) of varying forms and media, shown side by side with remnants and personal recollections from the process of manufacturing. The artists' interest lies in rerouting industrial supply chains and unearthing traces of ritual, meaning and impossible places within raw matter through cyclical transformations.

Installed on the wall of the ground floor is a series of landscapes produced by electroplating gold, copper, tin and nickel onto bronze sheets. The abstract renditions of open mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are materialised by the very elements excavated from the soil for industrial use. In *Retour* (2015), the artists scatter gold extracted from computer hard drives on the soil of a Congolese goldmine.

Itchy Palm Trees (2016) is a series of linear neon sculptures coated in rare earth minerals extracted from Chinese soil, juxtaposed with fragments of mammoth ivory, a material mined from skeletons deep in Siberia and traded predominantly in Hong Kong. In *Ultra-High Performance* (2016), neon tubes coated in rare earth phosphates sprawl across the gallery's floor to form the promise embossed onto the matter by its manufacturer. The artists distort the wording by keeping the structures visible to provoke a reading of the neon light as material and effect as much as message.

In *Bless* (2016), a desktop calculator echoes the devices often used as communication tools in the Guangzhou malls that trade Chinese products with African exporters. It is plated, frozen, and displayed on the gallery's reception desk, "short-circuiting" a business transaction in progress.

On the first floor, *D/AlCuNdAu* (2015) is a series of artificial minerals cast out of metals extracted from hard drives belonging to a data centre in Iceland. Ores composed of aluminium (Al), copper (Cu), neodymium (Nd), gold (Au) and lava rock were formed out of a geopolitical landscape in which data farms migrated to the island due to its climatic and legal conditions. The minerals are displayed within the carcasses of hard drives, exposing traces of African soil and Chinese labour, in a reversal of the "mining" process on the other side of the supply chain.

The minerals are shown next to *From Below (Power-Conscious)* (2015), a blueprint drawing resembling a cartographic map, overlaying Icelandic geology with server architecture and geothermal structures.

Grounds (2016) is composed of raw footage of a fireworks testing site in Liuyang, Hunan province in China, where most of the world's fireworks are produced, containing the local soil. Finally, the LED sculptures *We Have to Work Hard and Work with Our Heart* (2014) and *It Is So Brightness* (2014) illuminate the words of sales representatives on alibaba.com, a Chinese global trade platform.

About Revital Cohen & Tuur Van Balen

Revital Cohen (b. 1981, Jerusalem, Israel) and Tuur Van Balen (b. 1981, Leuven, Belgium) are London-based conceptual artists working with materials and systems of industrial production. They work with objects, installation and film to explore processes of production as cultural, ethical and political practices.

Cohen and Van Balen both graduated from the Royal College of Art in London in 2008. They have recently exhibited at Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary in Vienna, Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, the Ernst Schering Foundation and

Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin and the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, among other institutions.

They have given public talks at the ICA and Tate Britain in London, TENT Rotterdam, Tsinghua University in Beijing, Skiff Goma in the DRC, Centro Nacional de las Artes in Mexico City and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

Their work is part of the permanent collections of the MoMA, New York and M+ Museum in Hong Kong.

Curated by

David Ho Yeung Chan is a curator based in Hong Kong and Shanghai. With Pearl Lam Galleries, Chan has curated Lei Hong: Non-Geometric Study (2012), Tsang Kin-Wah: Ecce Homo Trilogy I (2012), Fictional Recoveries (2012), Su Xiaobai (2013), Déjà Disparu (2013), After Time (2014), Ren Ri: Yuansu Projects (2015), Ni Haifeng: Asynchronous, Parallel, Tautological, et cetera... (2015), Foot and Moon: Suki Seokyeong Kang (2016), and The Third Script (2016). He holds an MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York, USA.

About Pearl Lam Galleries

Founded by Pearl Lam, Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. With over 20 years of experience exhibiting Asian and Western art and design, it is one of the leading and most established contemporary art galleries to be launched out of China.

Playing a vital role in stimulating international dialogue on Chinese and Asian contemporary art, the Galleries is dedicated to championing artists who re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice from the region. The Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore collaborate with renowned curators, each presenting distinct programming from major solo exhibitions, special projects, and installations to conceptually rigorous group shows. Based on the philosophy of Chinese Literati where art forms have no hierarchy, Pearl Lam Galleries is dedicated to breaking down boundaries between different disciplines, with a unique gallery model committed to encouraging cross-cultural exchange.

The four branches of Pearl Lam Galleries in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore represent an increasingly influential roster of contemporary artists. Chinese artists Zhu Jinshi and Su Xiaobai, who synthesise Chinese sensibilities with an international visual language, are presented internationally with work now included in major private and public collections worldwide. The Galleries has also introduced leading international artists, such as Jenny Holzer, Leonardo Drew, Carlos Rolón/Dzine and Yinka Shonibare MBE, to markets in the region, providing opportunities for new audiences in Asia to encounter their work. Pearl Lam Galleries encourages international artists to create new work which engages specifically with the region, collaborating to produce thought-provoking, culturally relevant work.

Press Enquiries

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