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Aline Bouvy, *Potential for Shame*, 2021 (detail)

The last train after the last train

Lyndon Barrois Jr., Aline Bouvy, Rob Branigan, Katarina Caserman, Héloïse Chassepot, Alexa Hawksworth, Jacopo Pagin, Meitao Qu, Divine Southgate-Smith

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"[...] They look like late-comers, a little as if it were possible to take still the last train after the last train – and yet be late to an end of history." – Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (1993)

Public Gallery is pleased to present *The last train after the last train*, a group exhibition bringing together nine artists whose paintings, sculptures, and video-based practices prompt a consideration of the juncture between an unimaginable future and unrememberable past. Borrowing its title from Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, the exhibition gestures towards the immateriality and potential warping of memory and time, and brings into focus the accumulation of waste, dissipation of individual freedoms, and possibilities of hope renewed when living at the end of times.

Set to the 1989 crumbling of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the wave of optimism which overtook western democratic states, Derrida's text concerns his theory on hauntology, or the memory and inheritance of Marx and his ghosts. Present difficulties of democratic, free market economies – the plight of the homeless, lack of adequate healthcare, environmental degradation, enormous national debt burdens — challenge optimistic models for the future, bringing us closer instead to Slavoj Žižek's "apocalyptic zero-point" of the global capitalist system. To imagine the train after the last train requires a radically expansive perspective, a type of magical thinking.

Meitao Qu's *All Aboard the Glory Train* (2023) directly references the false promise of social mobility in the face of a slowing economy and rising unemployment, demonstrating a hopeful desperation to crowd the train beyond capacity. Aline Bouvy's jesmonite sculptures challenge moral and aesthetic notions of the acceptable, her parade of nudist police officers depicted with unbridled eroticisation in an ode to freedom and poetic transgression. The architectural utopias and speculative spaces of Divine Southgate-Smith's sculpture *MELA-9 Series: Past is Mourning* (2023) and film *AMONGST THE STARS, AGAIN* (2023) celebrate community, possibility, and the quest for new imagined realities. Equally, such optimism grows from the vines and branches of Rob Branigan's *Yesteryear* (2023), in which discarded objects emptied of their capitalist value are transformed and repurposed again.

If the workings of a haunting are such that they refer both to what is no longer present and that which has not yet happened, the specter exists wedged between the forgotten past and the future-to-come. To take the last train after the last train is to ride in the company of ghosts, of those not presently living; it raises a discourse on the politics of memory and perception, and inspires faith instead in a radical future reimagined.

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Artist Biographies

Lyndon Barrois Jr. (b. 1983, New Orleans, LA, USA) lives and works in Pittsburgh, PA, USA. He uses magazines, advertising, cinema, and vernacular imagery as primary subjects of inquiry, translating the language of printing and design layout into a variety of formal and material juxtapositions. Barrois Jr. received his MFA from Washington University in St. Louis (2013), and his BFA in painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore (2006). He has completed residencies at LATITUDE Chicago, Loghaven, the Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, Fogo Island Arts in Newfoundland, and the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin. Recent exhibitions include *Reflex Blue*, Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Dublin (2023); *Rosette*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2023); *How to Make a Mirror*, Melanie Flood Projects, Oregon (2022); *Mirage Collar*, Artists Space, New York (2022); and *Dreamsickel*, 47 Canal, New York (2021).

Aline Bouvy (b. 1974, Brussels, Belgium) lives and works between Brussels and Luxembourg. Bouvy's multidisciplinary practice is a way of expressing her refusal to compromise and adapt to systems in our society which aim to regulate our longing, conforming it to the norms and values which shape that same society. Bouvy questions and denounces how the images we have of ourselves and of humanity are determined by this morality. She studied visual arts at the ERG (Graphic Research School) in Brussels from 1995 to 1999 before joining the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht. In 2022, the MAC's – Museum of Contemporary Arts in Horny, Brussels presented her solo exhibition entitled *Cruising Bye*. Her work has been shown in numerous galleries and institutions such as Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2023); FRAC Grand Large, Dunkerque (2023); Baronian, Brussels (2022); IKOB Museum, Eupen (2020); and Constantin Meunier Museum, Brussels (2019). Her work is in numerous public collections including KANAL — Centre Pompidou, Brussels, Belgium.

Rob Branigan (b. 1992, Liverpool, UK) lives and works in London, UK. Utilising objects of representation - from diagrams to dolls houses - Branigan works with sculpture and print-based media to visualise how much is lost when ideas and constructs are squeezed to their limits. In doing so, his commentary on society and its discontents explores the interplay between longing, memory and temporality. He received his MA in Sculpture from Royal College of Art in London (2019) and BA in Fine Art from The Ruskin School of Art in Oxford (2013). Recent exhibitions include *I Want to Show You...*, Grove, London (2023); *Companions*, Union Pacific, London (2021); *Under the Volcano*, M74, Mexico City (2020); and *At Odds with Everything We Touch*, Standpoint, London (2020).

Katarina Caserman (b. 1996, Ljubljana, Slovenia) lives and works in London, UK. The challenge of representing nonmaterial matter is central to Caserman's artistic inquiry. She recognises that thoughts, memories, and time exist beyond the bounds of our perceptible reality, yet they remain integral components of our lives. Her work aims to materialise these abstract concepts by imbuing them with tangible characteristics such as colour, shape, and movement. She obtained her MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art in London (2022) and her BA in Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana. Recent exhibitions include *Pandora (Sivi.)*, Long Story Short NYC, New York (2023); *Conscious Unconscious*, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London (2023); *It is Better to be Cats than be Loved*, Tabula Rasa Gallery, London (2022); *Made in Heaven*, Des Bains, London (2022); *s02e02*, International Centre of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana (2019); and *Fin-de-Siècle #III*, Layer House Gallery, Kranj (2019). Caserman's work is part of the public collection of the Deji Art Museum in Nanjing, China.

Héloïse Chassepot (b. 1995, Paris, France) lives and works in London, UK. Chassepot's paintings summon profoundly mesmeric effects, seductive calls to attention, insinuations of whirling movement emanating from undulating surfaces. While her roiling, heady fields of vibrant color offer deep immersion, Chassepot's subjects resonate with more quotidian material, emerging from daily rituals and sentimental gestures. She completed her studies at Haute école d'art et de design in Geneva and gained her MFA from Goldsmiths, University of London, in 2022. She has presented solo exhibitions at Pauline Perplexe, Paris (2023); Downs & Ross, New York (2022); Lokal-int, Biel (2022); CAN Centre d'Art Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel (2021); and one gee in fog, Geneva (2020). Her work has been featured in recent group shows at Tara Downs, New York (2023); Pippy Houldsworth, London (2023); and The Margulies Collection, Miami (2022).

Alexa Hawksworth (b. 1994; Hamilton, ON, Canada) lives and works in Montreal, QC, Canada. Hawksworth populates her paintings with both fantastical and realistic characters unique in their exaggerated gestures and expressions which demonstrate a dizzying range of physical and psychological states. Her scenes are often imbued with an innovative sense of movement and time, showing an imagined, off-kilter world in which desire and emotion burst from the body and collide with the physical realm. Hawksworth received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Concordia University in 2020. Recent solo exhibitions include *Stall*, Bradley Ertaskiran, Montreal (2023), *My Wishlist*, Theta, New York (2022); and *Semi-Detached New Build*, Pangée, Montreal (2021). Her work has been featured in recent group exhibitions at Harkawik, Los Angeles (2023); Franz Kaka, Toronto (2023); Afternoon Projects, Vancouver (2022); Projet Casa, Montreal (2020).

Jacopo Pagin (b. 1988, Italy) lives and works in Brussels, Belgium. In his painting, Pagin transforms domestic or decorative objects into hypnotic devices that open up to unexpected dreamlike dimensions. His rendered objects represent mysterious doors into different kinds of perception, highlighting his psychedelic tendencies and inviting philosophical inquiry. Recent exhibitions include *Descendants*, K11 Museum, Hong Kong (2023); *Psychic Buildings*, Linseed Projects, Shanghai (2023); *Strategies Against Time*, Pond Society, Shanghai (2022); *Fata Morgana*, Make Room Gallery, Los Angeles (2022); *Uncanny Depths*, Centre d'art de la Cité Radieuse (MAMO), Marseille (2022); and *Machines of Desire*, Simon Lee Gallery, London (2022). Pagin's work is a part of the public collection of the Zhi Art Museum in Chengdu, China.

Meitao Qu (b. 1996, Shenzhen, China) lives and works between London, UK and Beijing, China. Working across sculpture, installation and XR, Qu's practice is concerned with the role of images in shaping discourses of gender, race and nation. Currently, her research examines the visual economy of the cityscape as a symbol of progress. Using miniatures and ready-mades, her work considers the artifice of the built environment to explore the conditions of what is lost and gained in the processes of urbanisation. She holds an MFA from the Ruskin School of Art (2021), funded by the Oxford-Kaifeng Graduate Scholarship, and an MA from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London (2020). Recent exhibitions include *Happy Valley*, Harlesden High Street, London (2023); *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, South London Gallery, London (2022), *Dreaming of Red Mansions*, The Photographer's Gallery, London (2022), and 'Adventures in Fact', The Residence Gallery, London (2022). Current and upcoming projects include artist residencies at Turf Projects, London (2023) and Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka (2024).

Divine Southgate-Smith (b. 1995, Lome, Togo) lives and works in London, UK. She/They has developed a collaborative, medium non-specific approach to art-making as part of a practice that spans photographic collage, sculpture, moving-image, performance, writing, spoken word and 3D animation. By questioning the traditional equation between sight and understanding, she/they can present complex narratives that reside within speculative spaces, where ideas are abstracted, contextualized, de-contextualised, voiced or silenced. Southgate-Smith received her/their MA from The Royal Academy of Arts in London (2022). Recent exhibitions include *TEETH KISSIN*, Soup, London (2023); *Ways of Living 3.0*, Arcadia Missa, London (2023); *Of Mythic Worlds*, Curated by Harold Offeh, Sainsbury Center for Visual Arts, Norwich (2022); and *The Practice of Listening*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2022).