



Carried on Both Sides: Encounter Three
Helen Lee, Lika Volkova, Caroline Woolard
August 30 – November 3, 2018

Performances

Thursday, August 30th, 6 – 8pm: Opening performance by Lika Volkova
During the exhibition's opening, Lika Volkova brings bodies into contact with her artwork. Wearing garments from the future, they rest under glass paperweights, asking us to consider the ways in which the @ symbol destroys sleep and takes over dreams, offering the glass paperweight as a speculative protection from the invasive @ symbol during sleep.

Saturday, November 3rd, 5 – 8pm: Closing performance by Daniel Neumann
The exhibition will close with a durational sound field composition by sound artist Daniel Neumann made in response to the works on view.



Knockdown Center is pleased to present ***Carried on Both Sides: Encounter Three***, a collaborative project by artists **Helen Lee, Lika Volkova, and Caroline Woolard**. Founded in research and expressed across media, the works in the exhibition explore the visual, political, and material lineage of the @ symbol. The artists employ traditional and experimental glass techniques to engage with the history of the @ symbol, and ultimately, to speculate about its future use.

Carried on Both Sides consists of three exhibitions over the course of a year, culminating at Knockdown Center in its final presentation. In the previous two exhibitions at Lesley Heller Workspace and at LMAK Gallery, the artists incorporated sculpture, installation, fashion, and glass blowing to create new artifacts that reference what the group calls “imperial residues” of ancient Rome that are embedded in the contemporary world. These residues appear in daily life, from architectural columns on buildings and the figure of the bald eagle on the dollar bill, to the ubiquitous @ symbol, suggesting that imperial forms long outlive the empire from which they were generated.

The @ symbol derives from a graphic representation of the amphora, a vessel used in ancient Rome to transport goods like olive oil or grain. The project's title references the amphora's original meaning — to “carry on both sides” — referring to the vessel's two carrying handles. The works on view aim to evoke questions about what connections we may find between this ancient mode of transportation and commerce, and today's digital communication.

We live in a moment that social theorist Jodi Dean calls “communicative capitalism.” In the 19th century, the capitalist imperative was to *produce*; today it is to *communicate*. For Knockdown Center, Lee, Volkova, and Woolard have created artifacts from the future of the @ symbol, a symbol now integral to contemporary communication. The artists speculate that in the late 21st century, the @ symbol will mark a command to sleep, unfurling in an imperative to rest and to dream. In turn, they have each produced objects using traditional and experimental glass techniques for future scenarios with hypothetical devices.

Introducing the show, Helen Lee's work **Alphabit** (2018) collapses the material histories of typography, incorporating elements from the letterpress and the vector graphic. Trays of glass letters and keyboard symbols made using traditional glass murrine techniques resemble the omnipresent pixelated screen. The murrine process acts as a material metaphor, using a 16th century glass technology to mimic the infinitely scalable nature of vector graphics today. Evoking speech and the passage from exterior to interior of the body, Caroline Woolard's **Tooth (W.A.I.T. Why Am I Talking)** (2018), forges connections between the space of the glassy screen, speech acts, and the presence of the body. Lika Volkova's installation **Dreamweight** (2018) expands on the tactile relationship between glass and the body, and the ways in which this relationship impacts sleep. Glass weights are set on the chests of resting bodies during an opening performance, indicating that these objects may aid sleep. When the performers are absent, the glass forms are held in stretched fabric paintings that resemble garments.

The material and infrastructural elements that enable a constant flow of information are referenced in works by Lee and Woolard. Lee's **Incoherent Brick** (2018) transforms a unit of physical infrastructure to one of informational infrastructure. The work is a handmade version of a fiber optic bundle, the thin glass cabling that transmits data at high speeds, supporting much of the world's Internet and telephone systems. Echoing fiber optic cables' function in their standard applications, **Incoherent Brick** allows light and imagery to move through a solid brick form. A bright orange glass form sags as it connects to an electrical box in Caroline Woolard's **Ta73060918 (Tantalus Series)** (2018). The work's title refers to the chemical tantalum, which makes possible our lives of power, portability, and networked sociality. Tantalum is an element crucial in the production of increasingly compact electronic devices, from cell phones and laptops to consumer and industrial electronics.

In the back space, the amphora's original meaning — to “carry on both sides” — registers in three works with bilateral symmetry. A mechanized sculpture by Helen Lee, titled **1/f** (2018), refers to pink noise — the technical term for the noise signal that most commonly occurs in nature and biological systems. The work imagines units of language as transparent glass spheres that glide along a glassy surface to produce an immersive aural atmosphere of crashing waves. Two works by Woolard enable alternative modes of measurement meant to prompt a more relational and intimate engagement with time and space. Made of glass and filled with mineral oil, appearing to melt around a wooden support, **Countermeasures: Levels** (2018) is a play on the common level instrument, while **Water Clock (Amulet)** (2017 - 2018) is made with the logic of an ancient water-based time-keeping device that measures an arbitrary interval of time.

This project was made possible by residencies at Pilchuck and UrbanGlass, a research grant from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, and a University of Hartford Coffin Grant. The artists would like to thank Alexis Wilkinson, Director of Exhibitions and Live Art at Knockdown Center and Knockdown Center's Curatorial Advisory Board for their support and encouragement.

Carried on Both Sides is featured in the PBS / Art21 series *New York Close Up*.

About the Artists

Helen Lee is an artist, designer, educator, and glassblower. She holds an MFA in Glass from the Rhode Island School of Design and a BSAD in Architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her honors include the inaugural Irwin Borowsky Prize in Glass Art in 2013 and the Edna Wiechers Arts in Wisconsin Award in 2014. She was nominated for a Louis Comfort Tiffany Award in 2015 and a USA Fellowship in 2016. Most recently, Lee received the Gold Award in the 2016 Bullseye Emerge exhibition. Her work is in the collections of the Minnesota Museum of American Art, the Corning Museum of Glass, the Chrysler Museum Glass Studio, and Toyama City Institute of Glass Art. Lee has worked as a freelance graphic designer for Chronicle Books and Celery Design Collaborative, and was an Affiliate Artist at Headlands Center for the Arts from 2009-2011. She has taught at Rhode Island School of Design, California College of Art, Toyama City Institute of Glass Art, Pilchuck Glass School, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, the Chrysler Museum Glass Studio, and the MIT Glass Lab. She is currently an Assistant Professor and Head of Glass in the Art Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Daniel Neumann is a Brooklyn-based sound artist, organizer and audio engineer, originally from Germany. A main focus throughout these different occupations is how sound interacts with space and how spaces can be shaped by sound. He holds a masters degree in media art from the HGB Leipzig and also studied electronic music composition.

Lika Volkova is an artist and fashion designer based in Brooklyn, New York. Her sculptures and garments have been shown at the Museum of Art and Design and the Queens Museum of Art. Volkova's label SANS was featured in Vogue, Metal, and Hint, and her work has been commissioned by PERFORMA. Her forthcoming New Economic Policy installation will be shown at The Luminary in St. Louis and at the Ross Art Museum in Ohio in 2018.

Caroline Woolard is a New York-based artist born in Rhode Island. Woolard employs sculpture, installation, and online networks to study the pleasures and pains of interdependence. Recent projects have been commissioned by MoMA, the Whitney Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Creative Time, the Brooklyn Museum, Cornell University, and Cooper Union. She is the recipient of a number of awards and fellowships including at Pilchuck (2018), the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (2016), the Queens Museum (2014), Eyebeam (2013), Rockefeller Cultural Innovation Fund (2010), Watermill (2011), and the MacDowell Colony (2009). Recent scholarly writing on her work has been published in The Brooklyn Rail (2018); Artforum (2016); Art in America (2016); The New York Times (2016); and South Atlantic Quarterly (2015). Woolard's work has been featured twice in PBS / Art21 for New York Close Up (2014, 2016). Caroline Woolard is an Assistant Professor of Sculpture at the University of Hartford and the co-author of Being and Making: A Guide to Embodiment, Collaboration, and Circulation in the Visual Arts (Punctum Books, 2019).

About Knockdown Center

Knockdown Center gallery hours are Thursday and Friday from 5 PM to 9 PM, Saturday and Sunday from 2 PM to 8 PM. Knockdown Center is located at 52-19 Flushing Ave, Maspeth, NY 11378.

Featuring programming of diverse formats and media, Knockdown Center aims to create a radically cross-disciplinary environment. The particularity of our architectural environment and history leads us to gravitate toward projects that demonstrate a sensitive reactivity to site and environment.