



“Let Me Be an Object That Screams”

GALLERY 400

University of Illinois at Chicago 400 South Peoria Street September 8–October 21, 2017

As powerful men set the world around us on fire, philosophical challenges to anthropocentrism can seem futile. From object-oriented ontology to theories of the posthuman, however, much recent effort has been spent complicating the Enlightenment ideal of man as distinct from nature and thus able to master it through knowledge or industry. In this group show, organized by Matt Morris, artistic practice and exhibition-making prove fertile grounds to explore de-hierarchized ways of negotiating the material world.

Taking its title from Clarice Lispector, the show offers sculptures and images (moving and still) that pulsate with an intense, uncanny energy. In assemblages such as Terry Adkins’s *Tonsure*, 2010, and Nayland Blake’s *October Chain*, 2007, found objects take on a totemic quality through their eerie juxtapositions, indexing a haunting sense of an implied, disembodied human presence. Catalina Ouyang’s verdigris-tinged sculptures of female heads and hands pushed the curator’s animistic conceit to an extreme at the exhibition opening, where they were carried around by shirtless “white dudes,” per the artist’s instructions.

The image-based works tackle subject-object relations from a different angle, positioning bodies that transcend their material bounds as transmitters of history and identity. In photographs staged at sites related to American slavery, Nona Faustine channels erased peoples through her physical presence. Leonard Suryajaya’s domestic tableaux and E. Jane’s sardonic self-help videos center bodily avatars that test the limits of their subjectivity, veering between self and other. On the whole, the dense theoretical framework cannot contain these divergent practices, though perhaps that is the point, given Morris’s interest in material tactics of resistance to the structures that give the world meaning.

— Jared Quinton