

# **KW**

**Tamara Henderson**

**Steve Bishop**

**Sidsel Meineche Hansen**

**3 November 18 –**

**6 January 19**

**Tamara Henderson**  
***Womb Life***

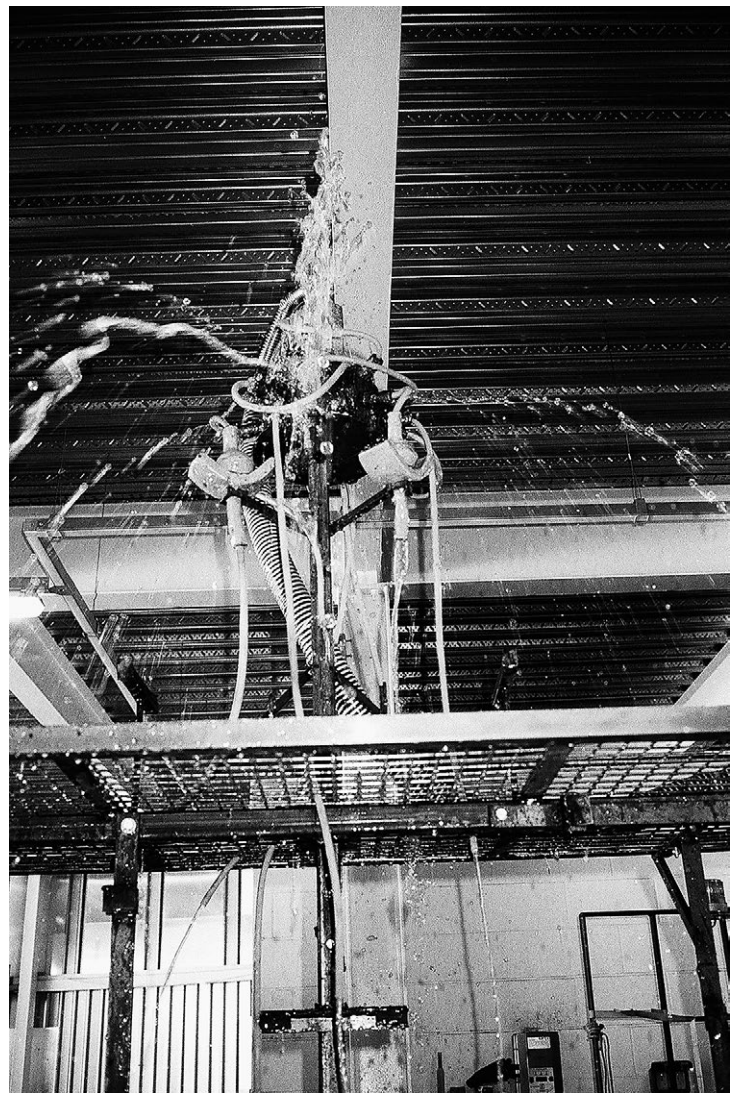
The foundation for the exhibition *Womb Life* by Tamara Henderson is manifold. One strand can be traced back to an encounter at Gatwick Airport. At 10 am on Sunday, May 27, 2018, in a Tokyo-style hotel room capsule, the artist had an impromptu hypnotherapy session with the hypnotist Marcos Lutyens. The written account by Lutyens tells us that an inward-leading progression took place: "(...) into the mud, the clay, the slip. Dissolving downwards into the loam with an x-ray view of time and space."

Tamara Henderson's process of creation develops its own mythology out of an ongoing practice of writing, drawing, and making notations of everyday objects. She registers patterns in objects and atmospheric phenomena and logs their appearance in dreams in order to expand conventional registers of consciousness. The hypnosis session paved the way for a multitude of resulting evolutions that would eventually become the work for the exhibition in the form of a film and a body of sculptures—born from the language of the mud, matured in the body of the artist, decoded by the umbilical chord, and finally grounded by the pulse of the placenta.

For KW Institute for Contemporary Art the exhibition takes the shape of a new five-channel film, also entitled *Womb Life* (2018), accompanied by a group of five characters masked as performative items of furniture and equipped with intrinsic sensorial instructions for the willing participant. Henderson works through an instinctive approach. Here, inanimate objects often become implicated in the act of storytelling as they shape-shift their way across different bodies of work, time zones, and spaces.

The film, shot on 16mm and edited in camera, chronicles the epic journey of the project, from its initiation under hypnosis at Gatwick Airport, the birth of its characters as part of the Kiln Residency at CASS Sculpture, a performance at the London Flower Market for Art Night 2018, to its final iterations as furniture sculptures at KW. Each of the five characters is conceived as a performative body that has a key role in the conception of the film—lighting its body, amplifying its voice, and recording its movement. The characters derive from aspects of the circadian life cycle of creation in nature: from the origins of life in seeds and from the interplay between the elements of light, earth, and water.

In the galleries the windows are shrouded in custom-made curtains culled from previous bodies of work, transforming the exhibition space into a cavernous viewing room that hosts the intricate interaction between the film and the sculptures. The new body



Tamara Henderson, *Womb Life*, 2018, Film still,  
Courtesy the artist and Rodeo, London/Piraeus

of work is further accompanied by a selection of older works by the artist to illustrate the complex process of creating the pieces as something only partially under the artist's control, while also being outsourced to unconscious processes informed by hypnosis-, trance-, and dream-like states.

**Steve Bishop**  
*Deliquescing*

In his practice, London-based artist Steve Bishop focuses on creating complex, surreal spatial environments that conjure subtle emotional states through the evocation of abstract, biographically informed, dream-like parallel worlds. His objects, films, and sculptures address questions of remembrance and how architectural spaces can reflect interior states.

For his exhibition *Deliquescing* at KW, Bishop builds upon a body of research that focuses specifically on the fragility of memory and the potential for its preservation, defying the gradual breakdown of matter through the effects of time. The exhibition is based on two distinct but interrelated pillars: one of which is a deserted town in northern Canada that was built in 1981 to house the workers of a nearby mine and then abandoned in 1983. Its remarkably intact state is due to the constant struggle to prevent the surrounding forest from reclaiming the town and is a testament to the live-in caretaker, who ensures that the lawns are mowed and the buildings are heated. The other point of departure is the unique restorative qualities of the lion's mane mushroom: an edible, bulbous-looking mushroom native to the forests of North America, Europe and Asia that has shown a remarkable ability to stimulate the synthesis of nerve growth factor in the brain. Lion's mane is sold as a dietary supplement for memory enhancement and is being researched as a potential medicine for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

A large structural frame covered in a semi-opaque polyethylene tarp retains the specific air conditions needed for growing the mushrooms within the exhibition space. The tarp is both a practical element and a conceptual membrane, setting apart the two realms that frame the exhibition; the world where the

mushrooms grow and that of the town. Paintings reproduced from the town are displayed behind the tarp, suggesting a fuzziness or out-of-reach quality. In the context of the exhibition, the preservation of the town, the uses of the mushroom, and the growing of the mushrooms in the gallery are brought together as interrelated symbols of "caretaking" and "maintenance," summoning a feeling of something suspended in the oblique feeling of half-remembering. The work displays a certain sense of aliveness, a charge that highlights a vulnerability in the process of continual growing and in turn deliquescing in a cyclical progression. Bishop strikes a delicate balance between a social blankness and a familiar—if not personal—specificity that both stimulate sensations of a shared consciousness.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication that continues the underlying research and allows for a broader view of Bishop's work. An interview with Anna Gritz and essays by Orit Gat, Gary Zhexi Zhang and Anna Tsing provide theoretical perspectives on the subjects of his research and contextually frame the larger objectives of the exhibition.



Steve Bishop, *Deliquescing*, 2018, Courtesy the artist and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

**Sidseleine Hansen**  
***Real Doll Theatre***

For KW, London-based artist Sidseleine Hansen presents the exhibition *Real Doll Theatre*, which includes collaborative works with filmmaker Therese Henningsen and musicians Asger, and Holger Hartvig, as well as a live set by the London-based Music project *Ectopia* of Adam Christensen, Jack Brennan and Viki Steiri.

Sidseleine Hansen's practice focuses on the industrial complex that connects virtual and robotic bodies with human labor in the pharmaceutical, pornographic, and tech industries. *Real Doll Theatre* continues this line of enquiry, with particular focus on the development of sex dolls and robots, as one derivative of automated reproductive labor, that creates a split in ownership between gendered products and embodied genders.

The exhibition at KW includes new video work, laser-cut drawings, sound and sculpture and unfolds through the notion of reproductive labor as animation. Reminiscent of Gregorian chanting the song *Neo-libertine* (2018), made in collaboration with Asger and Holger Hartvig will be playing at regular intervals in the gallery. The space is divided into two by a scenographic element, entitled *Hellmouth (To Madame)* (2018), a double-sided latex orifice that references the magical play of medieval theatre and functions as the stage-set for the performance by *Ectopia*. The division forces the visitor to approach the exhibition from two separate vantage points, that problematize the inbuilt hierarchies of what is "man-made" in service of desires.

One side features the sculpture *Daddy Mould* (2018). Made from fiberglass, it reflects the industrial standardized production of female forms that dominates the design of sex robots and dolls. On the other side *Untitled (Sex Robot)* (2018), which takes the form of a ball-jointed, life-size wooden doll, is accompanied by the video *Maintenancer* (2018), made in collaboration with Therese Henningsen. The video explores sex work and the maintenance of sex dolls in the context of a German (doll) brothel. It documents the initial transitions into post-human prostitution, where sex work shifts from the physical body of the sex worker onto the sex doll or robot, with the doll as an interlocutor, whose dead weight demands regular lifting, disinfection and repair.

Along different but parallel veins, the exhibition explores art's consumption, questioning the implication of the artist's role as both producer and product, and the limited control they have over their market value. The presentation at KW is part of a developing body of work called *PRE-ORDER I-III*, which unfolds across three venues: Kunsthal Aarhus, the National Gallery



Sidseleine Hansen, *It's not mechanical, my Hellmouth opens but can't close*, 2018, Digital foto, Courtesy the artist and Rodeo, London/Piraeus

of Denmark – Statens Museum for Kunst, and KW. The three exhibitions share the same conceptual framework and economy, with each of these institutions contributing towards the development of the sculpture *Untitled (Sex Robot)*. To the adult market of frictionless silicon bodies, the sculpture *Untitled (Sex Robot)* adds an object and institutionally financed prototype, with consequent new replicas to be made on demand. This association between sex and art as commodities is not posed as metaphorical one, but positions the art object in parallel to the sex robot, as a result of instrumentalised desire, embedded within their production, distribution, and sale.

## Public program

### *Double Bill*

Films of Tamara Henderson & *Cry Dr. Chicago*

by George Manupelli

4 November 18, 7 pm

Venue: 4<sup>th</sup> floor

Admission: 5 € / 3 € reduced

Advanced tickets can be purchased online on KW's website. Preserved by Anthology Film Archives with support from the National Film Preservation Foundation

### *Real Doll Theatre* presents *Ectopia* by

Adam Christensen, Jack Brennan, and Viki Steiri

28 November 18, 8 pm

Venue: 3<sup>rd</sup> floor

Admission: 5 € / 3 € reduced

Advanced tickets can be purchased online on KW's website.

Guided tours with mushroom expert Sylvia Hutter through the exhibition by Steve Bishop

10 November 18, 3 pm

6 December 18, 6 pm

Venue: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

Please RSVP at [reservation@kw-berlin.de](mailto:reservation@kw-berlin.de).

Talk and publication launch with Steve Bishop

5 January 19, 5 pm

Venue: Pogo Bar

Please RSVP at [reservation@kw-berlin.de](mailto:reservation@kw-berlin.de).

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### Opening hours

Wednesday–Monday 11 am–7 pm  
Thursday 11 am–9 pm  
Closed on Tuesday

### Admission

8 € / reduced 6 €  
Combined Day Ticket KW / me Collectors Room Berlin  
10 € / reduced 8 €  
berlinpass holder 4 €  
Free admission to people up to the age of 18,  
KW Lover\*, and on Thursday evenings from 6–9 pm

### Guided Tours

KW offers free guided tours through the exhibition during regular opening hours. For further information on tours for large groups (over 10 people), please contact Duygu Örs at do@kw-berlin.de or +49 30 243459-132.

### Colophon

Curator: Anna Gritz  
Assistant Curator: Maurin Dietrich  
Head of Production: Claire Spilker  
Technical Management: Wilken Schade  
Head of Installation and Media Technology:  
Markus Krieger  
Installation team: KW Installation Team  
Head of Press and Communication: Karoline Köber  
Public Program and Outreach Coordinator:  
Sabrina Herrmann  
Registrar: Monika Grzymislawska  
Curatorial Fellow: Léon Kruijswijk  
Interns: Stephanie Holl-Trieu, Gina Merz  
Texts and Editing: Friederike Klapp, Karoline Köber,  
Anna Gritz

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### kvadrat

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