

KW

Paul Elliman

18 March – 14 May 17

performs the new work silently, appearing to run through an inventory of movements of the body, from pedestrian walking, standing, reaching and touching gestures to wildly flailing movements set off by some unseen pulse or signal. The solo is improvised and Giannotti proceeds by attempting to read and follow the signal activity inside her own body: changing speed, posture, and direction in a mechanical response to what the body is telling her to do. The work is video documented as a single sequence of movements, displayed on a floor-mounted monitor, and accompanied by several different soundtracks, allowing the same movements to be read anew each time.

The monitor sits behind two full-size billboards displaying a pair of images from the work *Autumn/Winter 2016/2017* (2017). The newly commissioned work is a “collection” of garments made from shipping blankets and other fabrics used in the transporting of Elliman’s work. The images show a series of prototype garments for clothing that could be useful in certain situations. A refuge-wear, for example, that options the wearer’s right to remain inscrutable, something Elliman considers necessary to the body’s physical manifestation and sometimes refusal of language. If the clothes and images suggest, among other things, a fashion collection, they also refer to photographs made by the French psychiatrist and researcher Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault in 1914, discovered as part of his research into draped costume. As a series of photographs that will be seen on billboards across Berlin, they also connect back to Elliman’s iconic magazine work *Untitled* (*September* magazine) from 2013, which seemed to transform an entire full-sized Condé Nast fashion publication into a meditation on the intimacy of human gesture, often read in the mute semiotics of fabric-enclosed bodies.

In another reference to bluntly physical forms of human communication, *The London Stone* (2011) is a collection of rocks gathered from Mare Street in Hackney, East London on the afternoon of August 8, 2011, a day on which large-scale civil unrest occurred across the UK. The rocks, all clearly of a throwable size, provide an almost complete specimen of the variety of stones that make up a typical London street, including various kinds of London brick stock, fragments of asphalt, granite and concrete—presented as a loosely organized vertical cross section from roofing tiles down to clay, soil, and flint crystals. As an urban archaeology of the present day, the stones also represent the perpetually destructive drive for renewal that uproots communities and increases social division by leading to the kind of physical expression witnessed in the hurling of these very stones at the police during that August afternoon on Mare Street.

Elliman first presented the project *Detroit as Refrain* in 2010 after researching the Votrax voice chip, the world’s first commercially available synthetic speech



Paul Elliman, *Autumn/Winter 2016/17*, 2017
Courtesy the artist

engine, which was produced in Detroit with backing from local auto industry engineering firms. Working with computer engineers and musicians, Elliman uses the early synthetic voice to describe a parallel musical history that reveals the influence of Votrax not only on Detroit’s later techno music, but also on current developments in robotic engineering and language. In 1979, at the age of 17, Elliman moved to Detroit with his father, an auto industry engineer looking to emigrate with his family from Merseyside to the US. Elliman’s father soon followed a path taken by many engineers at that time, moving from cars to the emerging computer industry, where he worked from 1982 until retirement as a production manager at Apple. Elliman directly acknowledges this as a biographical source and contextual background for his work: encompassing the shift from cars to computers in these predominant modes of economic production.

After Hanne Lippard and Adam Pendleton, Paul Elliman is the third artist in the season to respond to the work of Ian Wilson. Here, connections to the work are implied in the conversational possibilities of the Ouija board series, as well as more generally in the idea of a non-visual world of thought rematerialized in a language of discarded objects. Elliman’s work often begins from a vocabulary of object remnants—building materials, mechanical parts, clothing and synthetic voice chips—in order to raise questions about how much of our existence is conditioned by the potential to communicate in the first place. These often-discarded objects appear as a code to the living, offering a key to the lives and languages of those they once belonged to. What will our things, and our physical means of communication, say about us to any future generation?

In conjunction with the exhibition Elliman has produced a new KW commission in form of an audio installation, which can be heard once a day at the courtyard of the

building. In *How we learn the old songs* (2017) two opera singers, sopranos Charmian Bedford and Lucy Page, rehearsing Johann Sebastian Bach's *Sicut locutus est*, are interrupted by a passing ambulance and immediately adopt the sound of its siren as a possible extension of Bach's work.

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Opening Hours

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

Admission

8 €, reduced 6 €
Annual Ticket – KW Lover* 50 €, reduced 35 €
Admission free on Thursday evening from 6–9 pm and every first Sunday of the month

Guided Tours

KW offers free guided tours through the exhibitions during regular opening hours. For further information on tours for large groups (over 10 people), please contact Katja Zeidler, kaz@kw-berlin.de or +49 30 243459-41.

Colophon

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