

Arcadia Missa ï

Notes on Entropy

PRESS

Notes on Entropy

December 15, 2020



Images courtesy the artists and Arcadia Missa, photos by Tim Bowditch

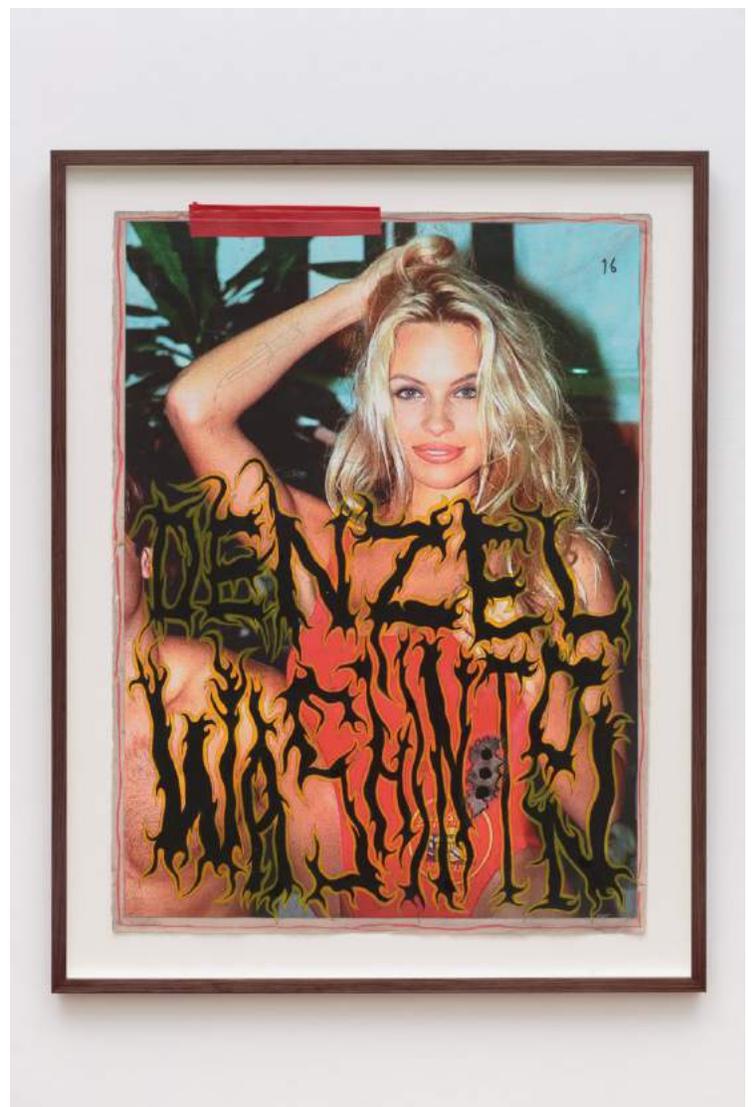
Review by Molly Cranston

The term entropy describes energy that is unavailable for “useful” work, as well as more generally, the inevitable decay and breakdown of life on earth. “Notes on Entropy,” an exhibition currently on view at Arcadia Missa, challenges the doomed narratives that entropy often incites, focusing instead on the term as a constructive process that destabilizes capitalist ways of thinking, i.e. embracing things that are non-useful, even disorienting. Bringing together a group of artists who work within realms of identity, refuse and (extra)terrestrial processes, this exhibition examines the pain and implausibility of our apocalyptic cultural climate and presents new, poetic possibilities.

Drawing on ideas of ‘anti-colonial entropy’ the works in this exhibition attempt to reimagine something different from what is already there, lamenting losses and speculating solutions. Naming disarray and breaking apart existing power structures become necessary in shaping a new future.



Cameron Spratley, *Be Ambitious With Love While Young*, 2020, Acrylic, gouache, ash, spray paint, collage, glitter, tape, colored pencil, googly eye, and china marker on canvas, 67.31 × 53.98 cm



Cameron Spratley, *Pamela*, 2016, Inkjet Print, Acrylic, Colored Pencil, Vinyl Decal, and Duct Tape on paper, framed, 35 × 26 ¼ inches

Three works from Cameron Spratley, spanning 2016 to 2020, flank each edge of the space. Spratley's work is painterly but remains underpinned by an archive of referential imagery that highlight a collective emotionality and complexity in the Black experience, and forge his own Black identity. Reorganizing images and words into an associative flurry, Spratley's works are like self-contained songs, sampled and layered with secrets. One must bend and crane and to glean every detail. A title taken from Tupac's upper arm tattoo, 'Be ambitious with love while young', follows me all the way home.



Alina Perez, installation view

Nearby, a trio of drawings by Alina Perez consider her real memories and their speculative counterparts. In pulsating strokes, Perez narrates and reimagines her past – a father with glow-worm tricks up his sleeves, an angry horse ride and a sky ablaze with dying birds. Details emerge from charcoal smudges making the medium feel carved and three-dimensional.

In a 2016 interview, Ser Serpas states, “The area I inhabit has always been apocalypse.” In her work, Serpas relies on an archive of found objects, trash, and gifts, redistributing their psychic and historic energy into sculptural forms. Turning over ideas of property, waste and regeneration- at once elegant and spluttering- Serpas’ works exude an electric and bodily presence.



Ser Serpas, *Lickshot dramamine and my ambition* ow, 2018,
Mixed media, Approximate dimensions: 150 × 106 × 17 cm



Renata Boero, *Cromogramma*, 1977, Natural elements, canvas, 145 × 85 cm

Renata Boero's *Cromogramma*, visibly time-weathered since its construction in the 1970s, seeks to embody the passing of time and the natural world without explicitly representing them. Boiling organic matter to create pigments, and administering them onto meticulously folded canvas, Boero has formed a practice that exists in ritual more than result. Boero's works change over time as the pigments and organic materials decompose. Stacking her folded canvases to dry, or burying them in the ground, Boero's slow process feels patient and capitalism-averse.

Jesse Darling's *Virgin Variations* provide a parallel to the legend of Saint Ursula, who along with 11,000 virgins, were massacred and buried in Cologne. Part girlish, part violent, Darling's works nod to the shrine-like adornment of the locker spaces of high schoolers, as well as emanate a sense of absence and the mystery of an empty tomb.



Installation view of Jesse Darling's *Virgin Variations* 2, 9, 10, 7 & 8, 2018



Frieda Toranzo Jaeger, “Universopolis” unbelievable space love, 2020, Oil on canvas and embroidery, Fully extended panels: 250 × 190 cm

Freida Toranzo Jaeger’s paintings depict scenes of space and dizzying solipsism syndrome (the feeling astronauts experience when distanced from the earth), imagining isolation and long beyond earth. In *Universopolis unbelievable space love*, Jaeger renders the crisp lines and cogs of space travel on hinged geometric panels that means the back side of the canvas is visible and vulnerable, with frays, staples and a cursive signature. Complicating and redefining painting with elements of sensuality and materiality, Jaeger creates a sense of dissonance, merging the real and the imagined.

In the projection room a film by Jamika Ajalon asks its subjects “How do you identify yourself?” in a home-documentary style fuzz. Ajalon renounces the reductive nature of identity categorization and exposes the variety of nuanced and conflicting perspectives that exist within Black communities. The film’s structure reflects entropic forces as Ajalon’s cuts become more frequent and cleaving, pixels and colours merge and degenerate. Music swells and a narrator burns *The Isis Papers*, a seminal book of essays on



Installation view of Jamika Ajalon’s *Cultural Skit-zo-frenia*, 1993



“Notes on Entropy” is the inaugural exhibition at Arcadia Missa’s new gallery space in Duke Street, Marylebone. The exhibition is open until December 18th.



^ Notes on Entropy. Installation view courtesy of the artists and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Tim Bowditch.

OTP Review: Notes on Entropy @ Arcadia Missa, Duke Street

A review of Notes on Entropy at Arcadia Missa, 35 Duke Street, Marylebone, London (09/10/20 - 11/12/20). Featuring work by: Jamika Ajalon, Renata Boero, Jesse Darling, Alina Perez, Ser Serpas, Cameron Spratley, Frieda Toranzo Jaeger.

By Eleanor Paine

Creation and entropy; two words whose definitions pull in opposite directions: birth and decay, fruitfulness and decomposition, generation and disorder.

Notes on Entropy, Arcadia Missa's inaugural winter exhibition, takes root in this troubled terrain. From the seeds of capitalist production and productivity, climate change and social disorder, springs this eclectic collection of works—spanning five decades—which, above all, interrogates what it is to create in times of crisis.

'The central conundrum of the Anthropocene', writes Professor Jennifer Fay, is that 'our collective efforts to make the planet more welcoming, secure, and productive for human flourishing, are precisely the measures that have made this a less hospitable earth'.

With these words, Fay comments on the cruel irony of contemporary society. In an attempt to give order to the wildness of the natural world and fuel a developing economy, humankind has toppled intricate ecosystems, ravaged the fertile land beneath its feet, and set off a chain reaction which, as the science reliably predicts, will spiral into the eventual destruction of our home. So, what of art in the context of this interminable entropy



* Ser Serpas, *Lickshot dramamine and my ambition flow*, 2018, mixed media, 110 x 106 x 17 cm (paper). Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Tim Bowditch.

Ser Serpas' sculpture work *Lickshot dramamine and my ambition flow* (2018) responds to this question, constructing the jagged figure of a raincloud from the miscellaneous materials of a modern existence.

Serpas compounds the organic with the artificial in this work: plastic tags and fabric offcuts are sutured together by brightly-coloured strings and ribbons, in an almost cartoonish commentary on waste, excess and climate disorder.



* Jesse Darling, *Virgin Variations 2, 9, 10, 7 & 8*, 2018. Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Tim Bowditch.

With *Virgin Variations 2, 9, 10, 7 & 8* (2018), Jesse Darling furthers this commentary on use, disuse and refuse by repurposing found objects to populate the transparent windows of five adjacent lockers.

By assembling fragments into artwork, both Serpas and Darling question whether disorder can be an opportunity for regeneration, and whether this regeneration can be constructive, rather than productive in capitalist terms.

Darling's vitrines were originally located in the lockers of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, where Ursula, the city's patron saint and the 11,000 holy virgins who accompanied her were barbarically beheaded.

In this memorial to Ursula's forgotten virgins, whose unnamed remains lie in mass graves beneath the city, Darling considers the intersection between productivity and reproductivity: where the female body is a means of (re)production, and is valued as such.



^ Renata Boero, *Cromogramma*, 1977, natural elements, canvas, 145 x 85cm. Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Tim Bowditch.

Renata Boero's *Cromogramma* (1977) also attend to the natural world. The work's horizontal placement on the gallery floor facilitates direct dialogue with the earth, and the rusted, burnt orange pigment of the tessellated squares carries an almost corroded quality.

This effect is achieved via a series of ritualistic practices: the folding, boiling, and immersion of vegetal elements which are then applied to the canvas.

The artist equates the processes of erosion and corrosion, rusting and rotting, deterioration and decay, with the processes of artistic creation, and in so doing, cites the enduring moment of entropy as an opportunity for renewal.

These works engage in open dialogue with the problem of creation, and its fraught relation to productivity in capitalist society. Alina Perez's *Untitled (Horse Power)* (2020) explores this both figuratively and conceptually via the use of materials.

The artist's titular wordplay considers how rates of work and of output are measured in units, but actively refuses them in her depiction of the living figure of the horse, returning to the animal origins of the term.

The artist's use of charcoal to sketch the creature's image in smoky grayscale repurposes the fuel of energy production, to create art.

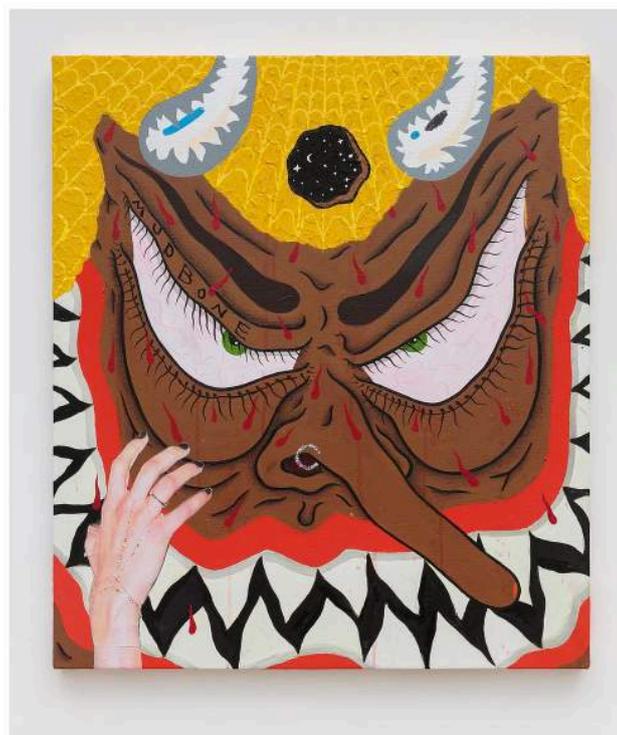
Perez's second charcoal work, *Sending Them Off* (2020), centres on the figure of a woman, turned away from the gaze of viewer. She kneels, her head placed despondently in her hands. Fallen birds lie dead at her feet, their eyes crudely crossed out.



* Alma Perez, *Sending Them Off*, 2020, charcoal on paper, framed, 134 x 104 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Tim Bowditch.

Beyond her lies a sinister hinterland of animal carcasses, whose desperately extended wings disintegrate into sooty flames as the eye is drawn up the canvas.

Scored by a barbed-wire fence, this work feels somewhat apocalyptic: the faceless human figure powerless to the ashy rain of death and destruction around her.



* Cameron Spratley, *PRIOR*, 2020, Acrylic, flashe, phosphorescent pigment, pearlescent pigment, gouache, glitter, molding paste, collage, colored pencil, and china marker on canvas, 76.20 x 66.04 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Tim Bowditch.

In Cameron Spratley's mixed-media works, *Pamela* (2016), *PRIOR* (2020) and *Be Ambitious With Love While Young* (2020)—which incorporate acrylic and spray paint, gouache, flashe, collage, glitter, tape, coloured pencil, molding paste, phosphorescent pigment and china markers—it is the viewer who is subject to the multi-sensory experience of disorder.

Here, the artist explores figuration at its most chaotic, capturing the noise of a modern visual world in a sensory onslaught which radiates out of the canvas.



* Frieda Toranzo Jaeger, 'Universopolis' unbelievable space love, 2020, Oil on canvas and embroidery, Fully extended panels: 250 x 190 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Tim Bewitch.

'*Universopolis' unbelievable space love* (2020), by Frieda Toranzo Jaeger asks what it means to decentre the human in our view of the universe. Unlike the works of Darling and Serpas, who achieve a similar effect through largely non-figurative means, Jaeger's work chooses to capture humankind's travel into space.

Depicting the Earth from this cosmic aspect, Jaeger's work is profoundly disorientating. It charts an escape from our known physical reality, from our ordered world. The hinged canvas effectively *unhinges* our ability to relate directly to the image, its winged halves angled obliquely away from us, like the painted panels of a satellite.

Just as it visually deprives the subject of its earthly coordinates, so too does it distort the physical dimensions of the painting. Jaeger's work exchanges the industrial machinery of the modern metropolis for the space technologies of the 'universopolis', questioning the status of the self when removed from the rigid stratifications of power which order modern society.



* Jamika Ajalon, *Cultural Skit-zo-frenia*, 1993 [still]. Courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London.

Jamika Ajalon's early video work, *Cultural Skit-zo-frenia* (1993) opens this conversation outwards, as the artist poses the question: 'how do you identify yourself?'

Captured in the grainy orange glow of a low-resolution camera, figures begin to recount their experience of social categorisation, referring to the arbitrary labels of sex, race, and class which we use to anchor our identity and relate to each other.

Speaking over the laboured trill of a xylophone, the first interviewee aptly summarises: 'All of us are some little mishmash'. The disintegration of discrete social groups—which cannot contain the film's subjects, as they themselves articulate—is mirrored by the disintegration of the filmic material itself, as the image quality gradually deteriorates.

In the closing scenes of the film, the camera lingers luxuriously on a burning book, its illegible title consumed by the flames.



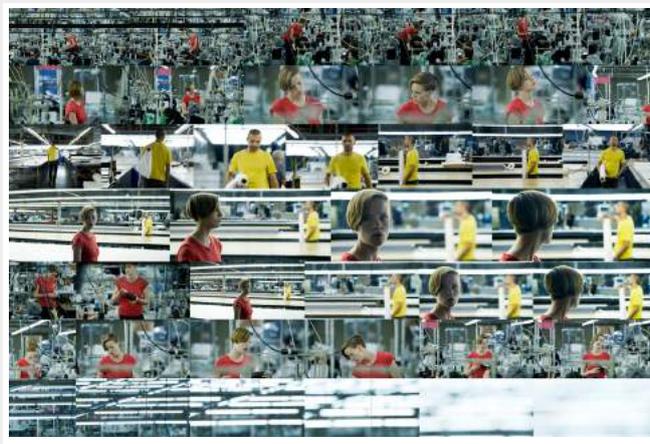
* *Notes on Entropy*. Installation view courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa, London. Photo: Tim Bowditch.

Writing from isolation, I cannot help but read these works as embodying a kind of exquisite liminality. All things break down. All things, therefore, embody entropy.

Hovering somewhere between chaos and regeneration, these works of art consider the politics of creation in an entropic world. In the words of Ernst Fischer: 'In a decaying society, art, if it is truthful, must also reflect decay. And unless it wants to break faith with its social function, art must show the world as changeable. And help to change it.'

London - November, 2020.

ART NEWS:Oct.02



Doug
Aitken
explores
the
impacts
of

technology on individuals and society In his first solo exhibition in Finland, **"I Only Have Eyes for You"**. The exhibition highlights Aitken's recurring interest in transitory actions, emotions, locations and states, which together translate a human experience grounded in tensions such as motion and stillness or connectivity and isolation. With a strong immersive dimension, the exhibition underlines overlooked psychological processes at play in one's relationship with social environments, where personal memories

are employed to decode implicit contents and narratives. A central artwork in the exhibition is “SONG 1” (2012/2015) the iconic video installation originally commissioned for the facade of the Hirschhorn Museum. In its reconfigured version for an indoor setting, the eight-channel video invites the audience to be fully surrounded by its aural and visual landscape. **Info: Curators: Leevi Haapala and João Laia, Kiasma-Museum of Contemporary Art, Mannerheiminaukio 2, Helsinki, Duration: 18/9/20-10/1/21, Days & Hours: Tue-Fri 10:00-20:30, Sat 10:00-18:00, Sun 10:00-17:00, <https://kiasma.fi>**

The
group



exhibition “**Notes on Entropy**” questions what it means to view the instability and degradation of entropy as a constructive process: one that destabilizes capitalist ways of being in relation and offers new ways for envisioning the world; one that embraces ‘non-useful’ work. Writing on imprisonment and disability, the anti-carceral scholar Liat Ben-Moshe has discussed abolition as a ‘disepistemology’, that necessitates letting go of certain ways of knowing, including even the need for and possibility of knowledge. This exhibition is interested in examining entropy as a disepistemology—a process of disorientation that, as Ben-Moshe suggests, is profoundly generative. Many artworks in the exhibition critically recognise that their environment has been formed by long-standing

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